



MEANS OPPORTUNITY

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The girls ran up the long steps and fitted the large key into the lock.

Frontispiece.

p. 29.

Jean's Opportunity

BY

HOWE BENNING

Author of "Hester Lenox," "Quiet Corners," "One Girl's Way Out," etc.

Mary H. Henry.



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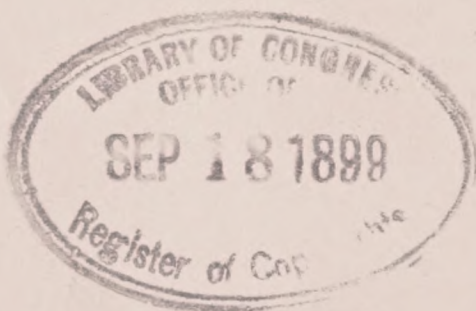
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Aug. 17. 99.

Contents.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. WHAT HAS JEAN?	5
II. THE OLD ACADEMY	19
III. BYWAYS	36
IV. WEALTHY TORREY	54
V. WORKING IN	66
VI. A NIGHT LESSON	88
VII. INTERRUPTIONS	109
VIII. OTHER GIRLS	119
IX. SECOND THOUGHTS	134
X. MAME EDSON	146
XI. WHAT IS JEAN?	164
XII. OLD—YET NEW FRIENDS	175
XIII. LENA EXPERIMENTS	190
XIV. A SIMPLE TEA-PARTY	212
XV. A DECISION	236
XVI. WHAT ONE OUGHT	253
XVII. STILL MORE	273
XVIII. A LETTER AND A SYMPHONY	285
XIX. LITTLE MUFF	297
XX. A SONG IN PROSE	310
XXI. STILL LOOKING FORWARD	324

Jean's Opportunity.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT HAS JEAN?

THE haze of a midsummer afternoon lay lightly over the hills and vales of Williston. It was the time when Sirius claims his ascendancy and gives days of heat and humidity and languor.

In a long, upper street of the fine old town stood a house with a deeper and more velvety lawn than any other near by. It was not a modern, recently-built structure, of balloon frame, narrow bay windows, and a tower run up anywhere it might happen. Instead, the square, brick building with deep windows and massive door still retaining its brass lion knocker, told of years and a history. It spoke of family life; of weddings that had been celebrated in the large parlor at the right hand, and of trains of mourners who had wept their farewells in the same stately room.

But at the back of the house, more modern

ideas, with plenty of money, had left their impress. Here, where the ground sloped rapidly, a broad piazza had been built entirely across the house. This was edged by a low railing, and with its mats and rugs, its small writing-table covered with books and papers; another littered with woman's handiwork; its couch and easy chairs, large and small, it presented the ideal out-of-doors home room so enjoyed in the brief northern summers.

The view from here was magnificent. The slope that lifted the outer edge of the piazza far above the ground continued on to the deep, wide valley, where lay the tree-fringed streets of Lower Town. Here were busy factories and lovely homes: life, activity, and at the same time, rest. A winding stream that turned many wheels, shone to-day as a thread of silver until lost in the broken hills far to the left. Beyond the green town below rose the still greener hills, that swelled into eternal mountains, peak beyond peak, soft and smiling now in their summer tints and veiled sunlight, but stern and cold and terrible when the winter and ice held them.

But the girl who had come out of the door, in deep mourning robes, seating herself beside the railing, looked off to the hills, and held a love for them at all seasons.

There had been much sympathy felt and expressed, when, three months before, Judge Hallock had been found at the call for breakfast, sitting in the same chair in his library where he had been left the night before, but with the seal of death upon his lips.

The judge had been an honorable, upright, generous man, with the courtliness of the old-time school; born and brought up in this old home of the Hallocks, and loving every tree and stone about it.

"But it isn't as though the old place would be broken up or sold to strangers," the dwellers in Williston, who hated to see changes, said. "Jean loves the place as well as her father did."

"Yes, but she is a girl, a rich one at that, and may marry and move a thousand miles away."

"Perhaps; but even then she would never sell the home that has been the Hallocks' so long, for more than a hundred years. There is too much ancestral pride in Jean; and beside, whoever marries her will find that she is no yielding, rose-fed nature. If she takes an idea she will hold to it through everything."

You might not have thought this, perhaps, seeing her now. The slight figure leaned a little wearily on the railing. The lips were drooping; the soft breeze moved lightly a fluffy fringe of dark hair around the fair, oval

face; the large, brown eyes were bent in a long gaze toward one point, where she could catch a glimpse of the village cemetery. It was there her father was sleeping.

Jean had been very fond of her father; more so, perhaps, because he was her one near friend. She had neither brother nor sister, and only the faintest memory of being held up to look at a sweet, confined face they had called her mother's, while she distinctly remembered the sobbing all around the room that had excited her childish wonder.

After that came a cousin of her father's, a prim, precise maiden, to oversee the home and herself, but the girl had never thought of loving her.

Her father had her taught at home; he did a great deal of it himself unconsciously. When she was only nine she would curl herself into a small armchair, upholstered in red velvet, her own especial property in his library, and listen while he read to her by the hour. Sometimes it was Shakespeare or Dickens, sometimes *Lady of the Lake* or Whittier. She loved Whittier best, but it was all music to her. He used to call her his "Little Lady in Red" then, because of the chair. When she went away to school she locked it away in a closet so that no hand could touch it.

For she went away at seventeen. The judge had always said it must be so, and she never thought of anything else. The judge had ideas both old and new. He chose for her the finest and most advanced of colleges for women; but it was for women only. He did not believe in "mixed" colleges.

Of course this was a new experience to Jean. She had never lived with girls before. At first she imagined them all the "loveliest and best." When she was undeceived nothing but her sterling good sense, and the influence of a favorite teacher, saved her from bitterness. After a while she understood better, became a favorite, and graduated in four years at the head of her class.

In the autumn following she went away with her father for a year of study through travel in the Old World. She brought home with her its Duomos and its Alps, its gondolas and cathedrals, as a part of her life furnishing.

"For it is from what you store within, daughter," the judge had been wont to say, "that your life must have any real growth. If you store beauty there, and elevating thoughts, and then live in daily converse with them, they cannot help but mould your outer habits and appearance."

On their return they turned to the south of

our own land, and spent the winter among the sunny groves of Florida, or the wonderful valleys of California, or searched among the ruins of Mexico, or wondered at the cañons of the Sierras.

And it was such a little time after their return before he went away from her. She was so glad to-day that she had all these beautiful memories. The tears were almost falling, when she heard a voice in the hall inquiring for her, and brushing them away quickly, turned to meet her business lawyer.

She had known Mr. Shearer all her life; he had always been connected more or less with her father. And as long ago as when she had first returned from school her father had talked business to her.

He had turned to her one evening when she was sitting in the cosy red chair and said, "Daughter, it is fitting now that you should understand something of my provision for your future. I have always thought it best for you to know much of my business and have talked with you as I would with a son." Then he went on to tell her of his will, its various provisions for things in which he was interested, the generous amount remaining to her, and that he had left all in her charge, and named Solon Shearer as her adviser and referee.

"I have known Shearer for fifty years," he said, "and I have never known him do a dishonorable or underhanded act; a rare character in these days. If I am ever taken from you, daughter, I trust his advice and counsel may be spared to you."

But she almost rebelled at this moment. "Why could it not have been my father that was spared," was her inner cry.

It was a very spare, slight man that came toward her now with a bundle of law papers in his hand. People wondered sometimes how the skin stuck to the bones with no more intervening flesh. The scanty hair and whiskers were of an iron grey; and the keen blue eyes looked out from projecting bushy brows of the same mixed hue; "pepper and salt hair" Jean had once merrily suggested to her father.

"A warm day, Mr. Shearer," she remarked now.

"Yes, good for corn. I have some business that seems to demand your immediate attention, Miss Jean," he went on; he always bristled with points. "You know of course that your father, the last year of his life, by purchase from the other parties concerned in the original purchase, became sole owner of the property known as the old 'Academy grant.'"

"I heard him speak of it, yes, sir."

"He had long desired to acquire this," went on the lawyer, "though why, I am sure I cannot understand. Nothing could be more unsalable in the market."

"My father held some things higher even than money," the daughter said, lifting her head proudly.

"Perhaps. He had some sentiment about this property; went to school there in his boyhood."

"And his father before him," interposed the girl, "and his grandfather also."

"Makes it of less value the further you go back," the lawyer said, dryly. "Now the business is this. I had feared the property would be a dead weight upon your hands: real estate in Williston is never booming; and of course unused property steadily deteriorates. The best I could hope for it was, to rent it for market purposes for enough to pay the taxes; the buildings of course I counted as of no use."

"How much land is there in that property, Mr. Shearer?"

"About three acres, perhaps a little more counting in the small orchard adjoining that your father took to satisfy the Robbins' mortgage. I am happy to say, Miss Jean, that this is the only valueless piece of property your father left to you. And now I have received

an offer for it that is the occasion of my present call."

"And the buildings, are they in good repair?" the girl went on irrelevantly.

"Fairly so: considering the length of time they have stood untenanted, I may say quite so."

"Is there water there?"

"An excellent well. I may say that has been one of the deciding factors in the mind of the purchasers, would-be purchasers, that is. A hygienic institute under two physicians, with nervous troubles a specialty."

"Did you ever hear my father mention any intention in regard to that property, Mr. Shearer?"

"Of course, Miss Jean, when the original party purchased it, it was with some philanthropic idea, I believe. That was when times were better. Then Wilson lost in those Texas deals and your father relieved him of his share, and when Aleck Morse died and his widow was left pretty poorly off he did the same by her. He carried out his original intention if the others did not, I should say," the lawyer added in his driest tones. "It is necessary," he resumed, "to give this immediate attention. They offer a fair price, though of course not its value, and I will appoint a meeting with them

here, at your convenience, to-morrow. It will take but a short time to arrange. Your father's affairs are all plain and easily settled."

"The deeds are clear then?" the girl asked.

"Perfectly. Never a flaw in your father's papers. When will it suit you to see them, Miss Jean?"

"Not at all, Mr. Shearer. The place is not for sale."

The lawyer gazed at her aghast. "I brought these papers that you might look them over," he said, slowly, indicating the useless parcel in his hand, "it will not take you long to understand it all."

The girl smiled brightly. "Poor Mr. Shearer, I have confounded you. But the place is not for sale, not to all the doctors in the country. I wish to keep it. I think my father would have wished me to do so. And there is no reason why I cannot, I suppose."

"Of course, Miss Jean, the property is your own: but I cannot see such an opportunity for you pass by, without protest. I should consider myself false to the trust your father reposed in me otherwise."

"That is all right, Mr. Shearer, and my father was right in trusting you," with her most winning smile, "but all the same, no one but Jean Hallock is going to own that prop-

erty at present. Why, it may become my greatest treasure yet; who knows?"

"If that is your decision I may as well give them an answer then," the lawyer said in his most non-committal manner.

"That is my very final answer," the girl returned, and then looked after the retiring lawyer with a pitying smile. "Poor Mr. Shearer, I pity him. The man who is so unfortunate as to have for a ward a headstrong girl, with both ideas and money, is a fit subject of commiseration; a warning to others not to venture upon such a task."

As for Mr. Shearer himself, he must be pardoned if he had much the same feeling as he pursued his homeward way.

"Dulcie," said he, that night when he and Mrs. Shearer were safe in the retirement of their own room, company having prevented an earlier expression, "Dulcie, if there is one thing beyond another that a woman ought never to have, it is money; the control of money, I mean."

People called this couple "the thin and the thick of it;" for Mrs. Shearer was as round and comfortable a little woman as her liege lord was spare and thin. She made one think of a motherly little hen fussing over her one chicken. "Look at this girl now," he went

on, "with nearly ten thousand a year of income, and no more idea of spending it properly than any other young animal."

"What has Jean done now?" asked the little lady, calmly clearing her mouth of pins. She was used to these tirades; and, beside, her childless heart was very fond of the bright young girl who made a second home in the quiet house.

"Done? Let me convince you of her foolishness;" and then he stated at length his day's grievance, ending,—“it is hard to a business man to see a chance like that lost. It may be ten years before another presents itself. Times are hard ——”

"It seems to me the times are always hard," his spouse remarked, unbuttoning his collar, and in that remark echoing the thought of an untold number of women.

"Well, they are," lamely, "at all events, property is always slow and dull in Williston. She might sell that now, and invest the funds where it would be income and not outgo continually, and that, Mrs. Shearer, is the only true philosophy of business. Why, Mrs. Shearer, how do you, how does any one, imagine, that that girl can go on, continually spending, without anything coming in?"

The judge used to say that, "Shearer had

chosen wisely in being only a business lawyer ; he could never have made a plea in his life unless his wife had been both judge and jury, and the only one present."

"I thought you said she had an income of nearly ten thousand," calmly.

"Yes ; now ! But how long will she, if I do not look after it faithfully ?"

"You will do that, Solon," with a glance that quieted much that was rampant in him. "What idea has she about the old 'academy property' ?"

"It does not amount to an idea ; notion, you mean."

"Whatever you please."

"Don't know, I am sure ; some impossible thing, I suppose."

"Don't you remember," Mrs. Shearer went on, "when the judge with the others bought that, there was a great deal of talk about making it over into an old lady's home, or hospital, or something of the sort ?"

"Yes," grunted her husband.

"I remember, you said it was a fine idea, and you hoped it would be carried out."

"Well, men were at the head of that, and it might have amounted to something."

"How gallant you are, dear."

"My dear, I admire women ; in their place.

Nobody more so. It is only when they try to run business or politics, that I say they make sticks of themselves."

"I remember Jean then," the lady went on, accepting the half apology, "and how enthusiastic she was over the plan. She came here one afternoon and talked for at least two hours about it."

"It does not take much to rouse girls' enthusiasms; any tramp in rags can do that."

"Not our Jean," with some spirit. "She has a deal of the judge's hard common sense back of all her enthusiasms."

"I hope so," was her husband's ungracious "last word," "or she'll make a guy of herself and all the judge left her, yet. It's too much for a girl just twenty-three, to control. I insist upon that; and only hope time will not prove it," in a tone strongly suggestive of little faith in "time."

CHAPTER II.

THE OLD ACADEMY.

MEANWHILE, the girl "who had too much property left to her own disposal," was considering the matter in a different light.

The lawyer had scarcely gone from Jean's sight, and not at all from her thought, when the rustle of sweeping skirts, and the laughing tones in the hall told of another caller. This was Ethel Nye, a lifelong playmate and friend living in another of the stately, old Hill homes. She made a decided contrast to the quiet figure in sombre robes as she seated herself beside Jean.

To say the least, she was "striking" looking; with her slender figure carried in all the grace of girlhood, her fair face and large blue eyes, and the crown of hair, termed "golden," or "slightly sandy," according to the terms of intimacy and friendship one enjoyed with her. However, Ethel was a general favorite. She had a hearty, welcoming manner and smile that made brightness wherever she went.

It was something like the way in which her dainty organdie gown swept over Jean's black

tissue now. The habit of lightening everything up. She did not like clouds and shadows: and her sunny life hitherto had always turned away from tears and trouble. "Trifling," some said. Well, that is often said of girls who have their characters yet to form. One sometimes wonders where the earnest workers of the coming generation are to be found, to hear the conversation of the present woman.

"Alone, are you, Jean?" was her greeting now.

"Yes, since Mr. Shearer left me a few minutes since."

"Humph!" with a shrug, "charming company! Should think even mine would be preferable. You received cards to-day, I see," with a glance at the table where an envelope with an elaborate monogram and crest lay conspicuous.

"Yes," smiling quizzically toward her caller, "do you know where Laura Matson found her 'coat of arms'?"

"'Ought to be a goose rampant,' grandmama says," the other returned with a merry laugh, "to symbolize her tailor-grandfather. All the same, she does give swell entertainments, and this of this evening is to be especially elaborate, as it is really Margie's introductory

'coming out.' She will be fully in society this winter, you know."

"Yes, not eighteen yet. How much does she know?"

"Her millionaire papa can buy brains for her, Jean."

"He cannot attach them, however, Ethel, so that she will become their possessor. And it always seems sad to me, in these wonderful days of education, that a girl must lose them simply because she has too much money."

"True enough, Jean. But no school, however chartered or endowed, could make students of all. Margie now, is a friendly, silly little thing, and will be to the end of the chapter. Just as easy for her perhaps, and she will give pleasure in her own way. Too bad you cannot go."

"I am not regretting it, Ethel. When I am out of the swing, as I am now, I fancy I have no taste for it. But when I get back again I find myself fascinated like the rest."

"You always did have the most serious times, Jean, when you seemed to think the whole world was on your shoulders."

"And after all, a mere do nothing in the end? Don't add that, Ethel."

"Oh, grandmama thinks you are a model, Jean. Says she expects great things of you

yet. So does your devoted admirer, Mrs. Shearer."

Jean started at the name, and glanced below the lawn where a man was busy among some garden-beds.

"Can you go and ride with me, Ethel?" she asked.

"When? Now?"

"Yes."

"Delighted to do so."

"Mark," called the young mistress, "please put Dilly to the phaeton, and bring her around at once."

"Yes, miss," came the prompt answer, and in a few moments, Mark, a middle-aged, pleasant-faced man was holding the gentle bay at the steps leading from the piazza.

The judge's establishment had always been a simple one. Besides his cousin, who for many years acted as housekeeper, it had consisted of Mark, who served as coachman, hostler, or gardener, his wife, Rinda, who was cook and laundress, and their orphan niece, a pleasant-faced girl rejoicing in the euphonious name of Arewytha, that had long been contracted into the brief title of Wittie. Mark and Rinda had been with them for at least twenty years and there were few matters of the family in which they did not have their sympathy and pride.

"Mark," said Jean, as she came down the steps now, "do you know where the key of the old academy is? I do not find it in the usual place."

"It has a tag upon it, Miss Jean, with a large A upon it?"

"Yes."

"I saw Mr. Shearer taking such a one away yesterday, Miss Jean, when you were away down town."

"Oh, certainly. I might have remembered that he had been there, of course."

Ethel had sprung into the low phaeton, and Jean was snapping the last button of her driving gloves before stepping in, when Mark stepped a little nearer.

"If you please, Miss Jean, that makes me think. Mrs. Parsons was here too the same time, wanting to see you."

"And what did Mrs. Parsons want now, Mark? The same old story, I suppose."

"Of course," with a grim smile. "He's gone again, and she's left to take care of the whole pack of youngsters alone; and how will she do it? for she'll never take him back again now; never."

"Poor thing! There are seven children, are there not?"

"Seven; and the oldest just past twelve;

and the rent overdue two months; and they're picking berries the best they can. But the baby's sick and all; I promised her, Miss Jean, or I wouldn't be bothering you. And the bright girl Philena Dean was once, and might have had her pick and not took up with that shiftless Abel Parsons."

"That's all right, Mark. I must try to go and see her before I come back. I saw two or three plantains coming up on the further edge of the lawn yesterday, Mark. Move on, Dilly girl."

"Poor woman!" Jean went on as they turned out of the grounds, "it is dreadful, Ethel, what women have to endure sometimes."

"Mrs. Parsons seems to have a good advocate in Mark," Ethel responded.

"Yes," and being now fairly on the street Jean laughed softly; "Mark has a soft place for the former Philena Dean in his heart. I am afraid that Cupid once shot some darts from her bright eyes toward him, and Rinda's beauty would never dispel the illusion," and both laughed again at the mental vision of the good cook's portly form and broad face.

The little carriage rolled smoothly along down the wide, sloping street. The immense elms on either side, of which Williston was so

justly proud, at times nearly interlaced their drooping branches above them. The girls met other carriages, from which bright faces nodded and smiled to them.

At one place a house was set far back from the street, and on its deep lawn a group of children in their light frocks and gay ribbons, were making the air ring with their merry shouts.

"What good times children do have!" said Ethel.

"Some of them, you mean," rejoined her companion, quickly, "you forget Mrs. Parsons and her clan."

Ethel shrugged her shoulders. "What's the use of remembering what it is pleasanter to forget? Besides one cannot do anything for them."

"Why not?" quickly.

"Because there are so many of them. Where in the world would one begin?"

"With Mrs. Parsons, I suppose. Anyway"—but her companion interrupted.

"Oh, stop Dilly a minute, please, Jean, there's Max Levison, he wants to speak to us. I did not know he was at home again."

Dilly was drawn up promptly, and a young gentleman, most faultlessly attired and with the finest of patent tips and the latest of ties,

holding his hat and cane at the approved angle came up to them.

"Home for the summer? When did you come?" asked Ethel.

"Last night only. No, I am invited out for August, on Merrill's yacht."

"Through with your studies in Berlin, Mr. Levison?" from Jean.

"No, not until March. Over again in September. You have met with a sad loss, Miss Hallock, since I met you on the other side," with a glance at her sombre dress.

"Yes," choking back a sob quickly; how near her father seemed to her to-day. "What a pleasant stay we had in Berlin. And father enjoyed your calls. He said it seemed so good in that land of gutturals, to hear you and the cat speak in English," and they all laughed.

"Miss Hallock seems to be mourning for her father about as long as one could expect, in spite of her crape," one of two elderly ladies who passed in a heavy carriage just then, remarked; "young folks have something else to do nowadays than to be crying for their elders."

"Yes," sighed her companion, "money and good times is all they care for."

"Dear papa!" Jean was just then saying,

"I am so thankful that we had that long, pleasant year together."

The young man looked at her with frank, pleasant eyes. "So am I, Miss Hallock," he said. "I don't mind telling you now, but I was getting a little, just a little, fast you know, before you came. It's so easy, you know, for a fellow over there. Nothing really to disgrace that dear little woman whom I left behind me, who has had so much faith in me ever since I was in my cradle, but I wasn't picking my company quite carefully enough just then. And then the judge came, with his strong, grand ideas of things and of standing up to them, and somehow they braced one up just to hear them. Gave a kind of backbone you see, and I dropped that set, and picked another, and studied better. That's my debt to his memory you see," with a graceful bow. But the daughter's eyes were too full to see that.

"And how is Cousin Bernice this morning?" asked Ethel.

"As bright as could be after the return of her only son," was the answer. "And that reminds me that I promised not to tarry too long away, no matter what attractions tempted me," and turning slightly he waved his adieus as the carriage moved on.

"I believe Max is going to turn out something after all," Ethel remarked.

"I hope so for his mother's sake if not his own," Jean returned.

"Yes, I believe Cousin Bernice would fade away quickly at any ill to Max. But, Jean," Ethel went on, earnestly, "she just lies in that reclining chair and prays for him. He ought to be safe. Maybe that was how your father was sent there just then."

"Perhaps. You know we did not intend to stay any in Berlin, but my illness with that low fever made it necessary. And Max was very kind to father. He found us a good home-place, and took father out a number of times. Dear father!"

"And Cousin Bernice is just too lovely for anything. I never knew any one so good. Her prayers ought to be heard if any one's."

By this time Dilly knew in her own mind their destination, and had turned in at an open gate that gave entrance to the side-door of a wide, rambling house, the home of Mrs. Shearer. That lady herself was seated on the side porch busy in some household repairs. "The key of the academy?" she said in answer to Jean's question. "Well, I saw Mr. Shearer lay a key on top of his desk; I'll go and see," and the comfortable little lady dis-

appeared in at the door. She came back soon with the key: "I am so glad, dear, that you own the old academy property," she said, reaching it out to Jean. "It would be just dreadful to think of that old town heirloom, as it were, going into the hands of strangers. Now we know it's safe." From which speech Jean understood perfectly that the little lady did not approve of her husband's business "ideas," and had expressed the same as well as she could in Ethel's presence.

Back again through the wide avenue they made their way to its upper part and there turned off into a short side street. After a slight dip and a gradual slope beyond, this street turned at a sharp angle to the left. But the girls did not follow its bend. Straight before them, rose a broad, steep, gravel walk bordered with noble trees. At a longer distance curved the driveway up which Dilly toiled bravely bringing them out at the head of the walk, and before the central entrance door of the long "Old Academy" building.

Catching Dilly's bits with a chain, the girls ran up the long steps and fitted the large key into the lock. It turned with a hollow, grating sound, "The protest of the ghosts of ages," Ethel declared.

But there were no "ghosts" of any kind to

greet them, in the wide, long hall upon which they entered. Only the dust of ages, as it seemed. Really, it was of much later gathering.

They glanced into the large recitation-rooms at the left hand, but turned for a longer tarry into the chapel door at the right. This hall occupied the entire end of this floor. There were windows upon three sides, and the afternoon sunlight lay in long lines across the desks and floor of the further side. Here, a short time since, had been held a summer school for teachers, of two weeks, and something of its paper litter still remained.

Ethel stepped upon the low platform where stood the reading desk and assuming a tragic attitude, began in hollow tones a speech.

"Friends and fellow citizens, for I am speaking in the future tense, Jean, when we shall all be citizens and voters, I come as a shade from the past, to bring to you memories. What we dreamed, you are: what we hoped, you realize: Jean, I wonder if that is so? Do you suppose we are any wiser or better than those shades of the past which I have evoked?"

"Not a bit," Jean returned, promptly. "Ethel, I cannot help but feel sadly here. Think of it! At this very desk," touching lightly the one by which she stood, "how many

experiences have been lived. My father himself may have sat here, or the mother whom I scarcely remember. They worked, and hoped, and longed, just as we do to-day. If these desks could speak how many tales they might unfold."

Ethel had come down and was standing beside her now.

"You are making me feel uncanny, Jean. I would rather remember the sly, little love notes that have been slipped along behind them, or the glances that no preceptor from yonder desk could intercept, that have shot above. Let us make a love song of life, Jean."

"Well, in one sense I would like to, Ethel, the broader love that is charity."

"Heigh-ho! What a charming dancing hall this would make if the desks were only out," and Ethel waltzed around to her own humming.

Jean had thrown open a window at the front and was looking out. The village streets on a lower level, the wide valley with its glimpses of spire or towering chimney; beyond, the long sweep of mountains. "Oh, the eternal hills," she exclaimed, "what a breadth and strength they give to life, Ethel."

"Yes, I believe that," her companion said

coming to her side, "when I am in the West I feel that I miss something. To look out over a billowy prairie, far as the eye can reach, is fine, but not uplifting."

"I know," said Jean, "it makes one feel small, but there is not hope in it, as there is in a mountain view. You are not pointed higher, as it were. The mountains speak of heaven."

"What a lofty idea, Jean."

"Well, the mountains themselves suggest such. Let's go upstairs, Ethel."

Upstairs they found a long hall lined on each side with small rooms. It was many years now since these had been used, and the prevailing ideas here were dust and bareness. Sometimes there was an old bedstead left, sometimes a chair or two, or a stand or old-fashioned bureau, but there were few articles worth the carrying away. The girls ran from one to another, peeping into closets, opening rickety drawers, exclaiming at the grand views the uncurtained windows gave above the tree-tops, or taking a hasty glance into the gloom and darkness of the attic. Finally the echo of their voices was lost to the upper regions and came in muffled tones from the basement.

Here they investigated with the instinctive housekeeping delight born in nearly every feminine heart. A dining-room occupied nearly

the entire length of the chapel, with stairway and pantries at its side. Across the end was the kitchen with more modern range built in; long sinks whose disused pumps croaked hoarsely but gave no signs of water; unexpected cupboards that called forth exclamations of delight; suggestions of moulding boards in the swing shelves that spoke of toothsome dainties, the concocting of which is a woman's delight; low window seats beside which one might dream while the hands were busy.

"I declare, this is dreadful!" Ethel had discovered, "just the dearest," old-fashioned corner cupboard, and was exclaiming over its deep shelves. "To think of such a 'cosey corner' as this being in existence, and no use for it. Imagine the good times some one is losing in the world."

"That reminds me," returned Jean, "of a lovely flower papa and I found blooming in a very lonely place in one of the Alp valleys. And papa and I wondered if we had not seen it, if its beauty would have been lost. And it made us glad, that we might believe that there was beauty everywhere, even though it might not be seen. It made the world seem a richer place."

"From a kitchen to the Alps! What a transition!" and Ethel closed the door with a

sigh. "There's one thing, Jean, if one carries a rich mind one always has her treasures with her wherever she is. You are teaching me that. I am going home to study my 'Works of Great Painters.' Next time I go into the kitchen to 'toss up a pudding,' or make jam, it shall suggest to me some scene from Raphael, or one of Carlo Dolce's heads. Do you see?"

They went up the stairs again laughing with girlhood's lightness.

"I want to see about how many rooms there are up here," Jean said. "About fifteen or sixteen; I thought so."

"Going to open a hotel or a summer boarding-house?" inquired Ethel.

"Perhaps, of some kind;" and they came again to the large entrance door. Dilly whinnied a welcome, the large key turned gratingly in the lock.

The girls stepped into the phaeton and drove around the south end of the long building. There, back a little, stood a square dwelling-house that had been the home of the principal in the academy's palmy days.

"This does not seem to be as well preserved as the other," Ethel remarked.

"No, I heard papa say it needed new sills; and I must see that it has a fresh coat of paint. It is decidedly shabby-looking. But it

is older even than the other I have heard papa say."

They curved around the steep drive, grassy and water washed now, to the street again.

"Where now?" asked Ethel.

"Time for the deserted Mrs. Parsons, is there not?"

"By all means. First a deserted building, then a woman also a failure and a disappointment. Jean, I think it will be a foil to Mrs. Matson's brilliant entertainment of the evening. Let us go."

And they turned down through the street, gay now with its afternoon seekers for pleasure, on down the more crowded avenues of Lower Town, through the narrower streets where the hum of machinery and the smell of heated wools came through the open windows, till they found their destination quite beyond the town.

It was here that Ethel could find her foil for the evening's brilliant promise.

CHAPTER III.

BYWAYS.

THE road, for it no longer possessed the character of a "street," into which our dainty young ladies with their shining carriage and well-groomed Dilly, had come, was one that wound off in continual curves, around the foot hills of the steeper heights beyond. Sometimes it was bush-lined, sometimes it opened out into sunny glades of scattered trees, or rocky fields of corn, or a garden outlined in stumps.

The small, slab house before which they halted, a mile beyond the town, had not a single relieving point to the eye, unless it might be the row of sunflowers on either side of the single boardwalk that led to the door. It stood on a shelving bank, a few yards above the road, with its open door and single front window. These might have been two bare, blank spaces had it not been for the children's tow heads that lined them. Back of the house rose a steep, wooded hill, and at the side, a thicket of weeds and potato tops, from which

a light-haired, freckle-faced boy lifted himself and gazed at them steadily.

"Is your mother at home, Jaky?" asked Jean.

"Ya'as'm, she be."

"Will you come and hold my horse while I speak with her?"

"Ya'as'm, I will," and Jaky came forward in a slow, deliberate manner, giving a hitch to his single suspender on the way.

"Why don't you hurry up, Jaky?" came in a woman's sharp, worried tones from the window, where a frousted head now appeared above the others. "You do be the slowest moving thing I ever did see."

The boy added no wings to his lagging feet, but calmly marched to Dilly's head and took the bridle in hand; giving, as Jean noticed, and to her satisfaction, a loving pat to the pretty head as he did so. Then he turned his frank, blue eye toward her.

"There's a trough of water just beyond here, isn't there, Jaky?" asked Jean.

"Ya'as'm, there be."

"I wish you would lead Dilly there, and uncheck her, and let her drink. Not too much, for she is warm; just a little. Ethel, will you get out, or stay in?"

"Out," Ethel said, suiting the action to the

word. "I saw some gorgeous golden-rod just back a little; the first I have seen. I am going for it."

"All right," and Jean climbed the steep path to the door. Mrs. Parsons met her there, "children to right of her, children to left of her," as Jean described afterward.

"How is the sick baby?" she asked now, stepping in through the passage way the mother made by sweeping her arms among the children and scattering them back like sheep. "There's three that don't belong," she apologized, "but their ma's gone a berrying, and she has a drefful time getting along anyway," and she finished by dusting a wooden chair with the skirt of her soiled gown, and placing it down hard on the bare floor, invited her caller to "set down, do. Won't she come in?" she asked, hospitably, indicating Ethel's direction with another sweep of her long arm.

"My friënd saw some flowers she wished to gather," was Jean's answer.

"Did? I don't see where. Nothin' but weeds round here. Children, perhaps she would like some of you to help her."

The hint was sufficient. With a rush, and a whoop or two, the room was nearly cleared, leaving, "chance for better air," as Jean thought.

Giving a chance too for her to see the rickety wooden cradle near, and the puny, sick baby in it.

There was no need to ask then how it was; the tiny, pale face, the tossing arms and moaning lips spoke only too plainly.

"Poor little thing!" and a wave of compassion swept over Jean's heart. "Oh, it is so small to suffer so."

"That's what I say," and the mother's sharp tones softened, and two tears rolled down her thin cheeks as she bent over the other side of the cradle. "I says, if 'twas only myself now, or some of the young ones as could talk; but this poor, little man, he hain't never done a bad thing in his life to be paid off like this."

"What have you given him?" asked Jean, waving theology for the present.

"Well, I did have a bottle of soothing syrup, that's a wonderful thing for quietin', and I kept him quiet long's that lasted; but it seem's though he was worse than ever since 'twas gone."

Jean shivered; she had her ideas of soothing syrup.

"Have you had a doctor?"

"No, Miss Hallock, I spent the last cent I had on the soothin'. I was going to tell Jaky he must go and pick berries soon's he'd bugged

the potatoes. He just got through last night bugging 'em for Mr. Sykes's. But he don't get nothin' for that, cos Mr. Sykes, he owns this house and garden, and it all had to go on the rent. Seems as though Mr. Sykes might have waited a while; leaky old shanty, anyway. *He's* said for a year and more, we shouldn't stay here; we'd move into town and have things decent. But it don't look like it now. He's lighted out, for good and all I hope," with strong indignation in her tone.

"Has he really left you, Mrs. Parsons? Mark said he had."

"Well, I hope so. Dear knows, I'm a sight better off 'thout him. And to think o' what might have been," with a sigh and fresh tears. "Dear knows, I hope I'll never sot eyes on him again," she added, drying the tears.

Jean looked around. She wondered what any man could wish to stay there for: it certainly seemed as though the small room, and the adjacent sleeping-room held all the dirt and disorder their narrow limits admitted.

"You must have the doctor, Mrs. Parsons," she said, turning again to the cradle. "This child is very ill. I will send him; or, if he cannot come he must send medicine. Tell me just how he is, please."

And while the mother garrulously went back

to the beginning and the minutest details of the illness, Jean slowly moved her fan over the little one's face, until the restless eyes were quieted, the sobbing moan stilled, and the baby was really sleeping.

"It's the first time he's been asleep since I got out of the syrup," the mother whispered.

"It is so hot here, and close," from Jean, "how can you expect him to sleep? He ought to be fanned all the time; and not have so many children in here either."

"I'll fan him if you say so, all the time," came from a voice behind her, and Jean turned to confront Jaky. "She come back and said I could tie her to the fence, she'd be all right," he explained, mixing the subjects of his feminine pronouns somewhat.

"Jaky sets a sight by the baby," the mother explained. "You see, he's the only boy beside him; the five between 'em are girls."

The baby was rousing again to its weary toss and moan.

"How long since you have taken him up?" asked Jean.

"Oh, not since noon; I thought he was better quiet," the mother explained.

"Yes, but he must be very tired of that same position. Here, let me have that cooler pillow in my lap, and place him on that while

you shake up those hot things he has been lying on, and cool them off. Why, they are wet with perspiration!" she exclaimed, as the mother carefully lifted the tiny form. "Do put them out of doors, and pull off the cases and dry them. There! See, he enjoys the change," as she turned the little one on its side, and the fretful moan ceased again. "Now, I believe he would enjoy having his face and head bathed in warm water," Jean went on.

"I haven't dast to wash him for fear he would take cold," said the mother, "but there's some warm water left in the kettle, if you say so."

"It will not hurt him," returned Jean. "When I was sick and feverish, nothing rested me like the bathing. Have you a soft cloth?" for by this time Jaky, in his own calm but sure way, had placed a battered tin dish of warm water beside her. "Oh, that is too heavy," as Mrs. Parsons drew from a drawer a large wash cloth, knit from the coarsest of cotton yarn. It was evidently a choice thing in the owner's eyes. "I knit it myself," she said, holding it out with pride, "like one I see down to the Cheshire Fair; and it's never been used; not once."

"It is nice, but too large for baby. Here, my handkerchief is perfectly clean, I will use

that," and she drew out the bit of fine linen, and dipping in the water that Jaky held, moved gently over the little, heated face and neck, moistening the dry ears and the parched lips, and the burning hands and arms, then over the round head, until the light, silky curls covered it like a silver crown.

"O, miss, he most laughed; he's that glad," Jaky said once.

"Perhaps that is enough now," Jean said, presently. "What is his name?" she asked, stroking the curls softly.

"Max. I see it in my reading book. I named him," from Jaky.

"Yes, Jaky would have just that short bit. I wanted him Levi Ebenezer, after his two grandfathers," said Mrs. Parsons.

Jean stooped over the tiny face and kissed it. Perhaps it was to hide a smile; perhaps, because she really could not help it; it was such a dear, sweet little face in its pitiful weakness, now that it was clean and fresh.

"I must go now," she said, lifting herself, "and, Mrs. Parsons, do try and keep the children out of doors. It will be so much better for the baby."

"I will if I can," the mother answered, lifting the pillow, and clasping it, with its small burden close to her heart. "I never had one

of 'em so sick before, and I s'pose I don't know just how to tend it; the others have been tough, as he is; this is more like me. I know what 'tis to feel bad, times enough, myself. Yes, mother does, little man; but 'twould just break her heart if anything happened to him; so 'twould," and Jean looked at the worn, hollow-eyed face opposite with a new thought, and a new respect: the respect we give to suffering wherever we find it.

Perhaps it had never occurred to Jean before that this woman, because poor, and not expecting anything out of life, could yet feel its bitterness and long for something better.

"'Twould a'most break my heart," the mother went on, "if anything should hurt Max. He's been the very happiest baby we ever had; allus a laughing and a cooing. Hain't he, Jaky? You don't think he's so drefful sick, do you, Miss Hallock? Mrs. Carr's baby was that sick last year they watched all night to see him die. But he didn't; he got well. Max ain't so sick as that baby; is he, Jaky?"

A new dread that had scarcely been defined before was chilling the mother's heart. And Jean had wondered a while before if the mother would care.

"I will go, and send the doctor at once,"

she said now, "only, some one must go with me, to bring back medicine, if he cannot come at once."

"I will go," Jaky said, quietly.

There were a few more words spoken and then Jean went out the door. Ethel was sitting in the carriage in a bower of golden-rod. It flushed the atmosphere with its brilliant coloring. Dilly was nibbling at the bushes; but down beside the road Jaky stood in the centre of a small group, who were giving the closest attention to his words.

"And ef I hear of a fellow goin' in there while I'm gone, 'less ma calls you, I'll whack you all round when I gets back," Jean overheard him say, and smiled to herself.

"Will you sit in the bottom of the carriage till we get into town?" she asked.

"No'm."

"But you cannot keep up with us on foot."

"Ya'as'm, I can."

They drove back, now slowly, now faster, but at whatever pace, if they looked back frequently, they were sure to see a barefoot, ragged boy, just at a respectful distance, attending them.

"Jaky's feet are more nimble than his tongue," Ethel remarked once, "I did not suppose he could do so well."

"'Tis love that is spurring him on," Jean answered; "he is very fond of that baby."

"Strange! You would almost think it would be a relief to lose it. I do not mean that unkindly, Jean, but there are so many of them, and so little to do with, and a miserable, good-for-nothing father."

"Yes, but your sister Lucile, Ethel, couldn't clasp her little Marjorie more passionately at the fear of losing her, than that woman did her baby to-day. She had not seemed to realize that it was very sick before."

"Poor thing! It must be nice to have plenty of five dollar bills to pass out, as you can, Jean. As you know, they are not so plentiful in the Nye mansion."

"Yes, I am glad. I can send her a doctor, and some things she needs; but, after all, there may be gifts quite as good." But Jean did not tell of that newer ministry of the water, and the pillows. There was a feeling that was new in her heart: as though she had entered into a sacred service; she could not speak of that. "What did you do while I was in?" she asked.

Ethel laughed. "I gathered my 'weeds,' as they called them, attended by the entire Parsons' troop that you rejected. Then I sat on a rock, not too near them, you know, and told

them stories. And, I declare, Jean, I didn't see but they enjoyed them as well as Lucile's flock do, and they asked just as cute questions. But, Jean, I couldn't touch them. They were not quite enticing enough for that."

Good Doctor Lambeth was at his door and came to the carriage with a cordial greeting. He had been the physician in both of their homes ever since they could remember.

"Hum, ha! A new patient; sick baby; in that Parsons' shanty. Had I better try to keep it alive, Miss Jean?"

"Of course. You will do your best, I know. Don't let Jaky hear you," with a glance back.

"Ah! looks like one of the tribe. Want another one to grow up on the same pattern, do you?"

"No, sir, I want an improvement," Jean retorted so promptly that the doctor smiled, but went on —

"Now, Miss Jean, we believe in heaven, and that it is a better place than this, free from suffering, and from sin. Now, why mourn if this little one, who has never known the sin, slips away from its contaminating surroundings, into that purity and happiness?"

Jean settled herself quietly back in the corner of the seat. "Well, doctor," she said, "first of all, there is the mother."

"Better off without it," from the doctor.

"Perhaps so, as to ease, but her heart does not say so. Why, doctor, one of its smiles now would repay her for nights of watching."

"And then," the doctor went on, "who can tell what it may grow up to? Our prisons are full of men, once smiling, curly-haired babies, whose mothers doted on them."

"Yes," Jean returned, thoughtfully, "perhaps the rest of society has not done its duty toward them."

"What! You would have children grow up into criminals, for the purpose of disciplining the rest of society, as you express it, into their duty."

"No, sir," Jean returned, "but I would have you go out and do your best to give Mrs. Parsons' baby health, and then trust the rest."

The doctor laughed heartily. "Ah, Miss Jean! argue with a woman the best that you can: and she will be sure to slip around all your premises, and so appeal to one's feelings, that soft-hearted old fellows like myself can never resist. So I must do my best to cure that poor little midge, and I will promise you, Miss Jean, to do it."

"I never doubted that, sir. I was only waiting for you to offer to take it to your own

home for tenderer care," Jean retorted. "And can you go at once?"

"As soon as I call on the rich Mrs. Van Dyne who had hysterics yesterday. Here, you boy," calling to Jaky, "you can get in and ride back with me."

"I want to send something by Jaky, doctor."

"From where?"

"Weeden's store."

"I will call and get your package."

"All right, sir," and the girls drove on.

It was a generous package; large enough to hide the bareness of Jaky's ankles, that awaited them. Jean had pleased herself in selecting pretty, but useful things. She had too much of the judge's practical nature not to do that.

"There's clean bedding in there for it, and do tell her she must use it," Jean said in answer to the doctor's look.

"Yes, yes, I can be nurse as well as physician if necessary. Now, if you will step into the drug store and order me one or two foods and such things, so that no time may be lost if it needs nourishment. And tell them it is for my bill," at which Jean smiled. "Now, good-day, ladies," and with a quick touch to his hat the doctor was off.

"That means, to stay as long as he is needed," Ethel remarked as they too turned

away. "When he leaves Mike at home and drives for himself, it means unlimited stay."

"Yes, it will be like him to stay all night. He has done that at the poorhouse more than once."

Then Ethel glanced at her watch. "I shall have to ask you, Jean, to hasten Dilly's pace. It is a lawn party you know, to-night, and begins at sundown; and his majesty will soon dip behind the western hills. Kitty has a new gown for the occasion; made in New York."

And after that the subject of Mrs. Parsons' family was laid aside.

The sun went down in a blaze of glory that night, and the soft afterglow of the summer twilight lingered long, flushing the long range of "eternal hills" with rose, that faded into violet, then deepened to amethyst, and then to tints of royal purple. The lights of the valley flashed and sparkled, half hidden by the full-leaved trees.

One watcher, sitting on the wide piazza of the old Hallock home wondered how she could take all this beauty in. It filled her soul with awe. "There must come some time when I shall be better able to comprehend it," she thought.

Jean had come out after the evening meal a little restless and discontented. She was only

a girl still ; a womanly girl, but one for whom life, until so very recently, had seemed to offer only pleasure. Even her duties, that had come as a daughter, and student, had been her highest pleasures.

She had loved her father too well, and his passing away was too recent for her to really wish for gay scenes. And yet, in this waiting she was lonely as never before. As she sat in a low chair, with arms leaning upon the railing, and eyes trying to take in the beauty, there would come to her ear the softened strains of music from Mrs. Matson's gathering, and she could fancy the festivity of the hour ; the gayly trimmed and lighted house and grounds, the floating dresses, the merry voices and bright eyes.

How often, and how thoughtlessly, as though it had been what she was made for, she had taken a part in such scenes.

And now, it could never be the same again ; not just the same ; and youth turns aside so naturally from any burial, even those of its dreams.

She might be a part of such again, in time ; might find her old place among the lights and the flowers ; but there must be a change in it.

When she came home from it all, there would be no father waiting in his library

chair with a smiling welcome. No voice would say, "Did you have a pleasant evening, daughter?" No one who loved her first of all would be waiting for the good-night kiss. Oh, how could she ever enjoy any pleasure again.

The lights in the valley grew dim. Lower and lower sunk the head of the watcher upon her arms; while sobs shook the slight figure in its brief tempest of longing. Then the sobs were quieted, as thoughts of love quiet any heart.

Presently she lifted her head, just as a full moon,

"A ribbon at a time,"

rolled itself, slowly and grandly, into view above the mountain-tops; giving its silver for the lost violet, and striking into wondrous beauty the expanse of hill and vale. In its light the trees stretched out their wide arms and their leaves hung motionless; the beds of white flowers stood up as white ghosts; the distant stream shone as a silver thread.

Oh, the wonder of it all! Probably we shall never understand, in this life, how a true disciple of nature wins lessons of hope and strength. It crept into the girl's sad heart and took possession of it. It comforted and cheered as nature does. It told her there was still left beauty, and goodness and work.

Her eye sought the little mountain hollow where the small Parsons' home was nestling. She knew the moon was just as lavish of its favors there as here. She wondered how the tiny sufferer there was faring. She remembered how the mother's eye had brightened when she had promised to send the doctor.

After all, what would be her father's word could it sound back to-night? Would it not be, "My child, live joyfully, bravely, and for others"?

Again the head dropped. Yes, life could never again be as selfish or thoughtless as before. She would live more for others' needs. Let the moonlight seal her resolve upon the fair young face.

Then the thoughts of the day grew. She had looked over the academy building, that "useless piece of property," with a dawning idea of making it of some use, and so carrying out an intention of her father's.

Now, after the experience of the afternoon, she was more firmly fixed in her resolve.

She had not given a hint of it to Ethel. But she must talk with some one. Youth's privilege is to share its thought.

All at once, Cousin Wealthy came into her mind.

CHAPTER IV.

WEALTHY TORREY.

“THERE is Wealthy;” then a little pause and the judge added, “And Jean, it may be I have a duty toward her of which I have never spoken to you. It has occurred to me of late years that my feeling toward her may not have been fully just, and such as your mother would have wished me to cherish.”

Jean raised her eyes expectantly. These were unusual words for her father.

The two were sitting alone, two years before this, in the dear old library. It was the evening of the day on which the judge's cousin had left them. Jean had been at home from school but a few days when this cousin, who had presided over the affairs of the Hallock household nearly twenty years, informed them, now that it no longer seemed her duty to remain, she would prefer to return to her own village, take a few rooms in her own house there, and live more quietly and easily.

They were surprised, but not deeply regretful. Her faithfulness had kept the domestic wheels running smoothly, but long ago Jean

had recognized the fact that there was neither love nor tenderness for her under the cold exterior. She would do her duty by "Henry's child" no more.

So it was the question now of "what next?"

"Being twenty-one," Jean suggested, "I suppose that I could look after the house, and myself, too."

But the judge shook his head. He was a stickler for old time proprieties.

"It would be a good deal of care and confinement," he said; "and then, when I am obliged to be absent, I do not like to leave you alone. You have many coming and going, and it takes so little to start idle gossip. Then, too, when we are both away, it is better for the order of the house to leave a head."

It was after this and a few moments of reflective walking back and forth, that he had made our opening remark—"There is Wealthy."

Now, as Jean waited, he went on, with what was evidently a little effort.

"Your mother, Jean, was the sweetest girl I ever knew. How well I remember the first morning that she came into the old academy. She was a new scholar, from Leeds, and they gave her a seat a little in front of me, at one side. I thought I had never seen so pretty a

face. The wind came in at the open window and blew the tiny brown curls on her neck all about. It was just blossom time and there was a large apple-tree close by the window ; one of the flowers blew in and lay on her braid of hair, and I swept it off on my way out to class and put it in my book and kept it for years. How she laughed when she saw it after she was my wife. I think I lost my heart to her at once ; I never cared for any one but her after that. Then we were married and came into this old home. It had been lonely enough before, for, as you know I had neither father, mother, brother nor sister left. Well, she lightened it up like a sunbeam," and the judge's voice was quiet. He was far back for a time in the old days. Then he roused again.

"She was an orphan too, you know, Jean, almost as alone as myself, but she had one member of their family circle left, a cousin, Wealthy, some seven or eight years younger than herself, who had been brought up in her home like a younger sister. She wanted Wealthy to come and live with us. Of course I was glad to please her. She came, a girl of sixteen or so, and I liked her though I sometimes thought her willful in her quiet way. But your mother was very fond of her, and after your brother Charley died, and your

mother had that long illness from grief, Wealthy was devoted to her. Your mother never forgot that. She was not one who ever forgot a kindness. When you came, Wealthy was almost as fond of you as your mother was. But when you were about a year old, and Wealthy had been with us some five years, we began to be troubled about her. We found that a young fellow, by the name of Ralph Torrey, in school at the academy with her, was showing her much attention, and we feared that she was growing fond of him.

“I never liked the looks of the fellow, and it was easy enough to ascertain that his habits were of the worst, although he was younger than Wealthy. We told her of this but were surprised to find that she did not believe us. She had always seemed so gentle, but she was infatuated now. Then we took her from school, she was almost through anyway. But in a little while we were convinced that she met him secretly. That was an underhand thing I could not brook, and we had a stormy interview in this room. At least my part was stormy. She only cried and cried, but would not promise to give him up. ‘I can’t, I can’t, for I do care for him,’ she would say.

“But I paid no heed to that; I thought it was a girl’s fancy; and forbade her on pain of my

severe displeasure having anything more to do with him. A week later they ran over the line and were married, and I have never seen her since."

"What became of them?" asked Jean.

"Just what one would expect from a good-for-nothing like Torrey. He led her a poor, wandering life until the thousand dollars that she had inherited was used up; he gambled some too, in a small way. Then, just as they were reduced about as low as they could be and live, an old aunt of his died, and left him a small, hilly farm in a remote town, and they went there, and he settled down into an utterly shiftless life, of smoking and loafing, while Wealthy worked as a patient drudge to make their few acres furnish them bread. When your mother died she left in her will a thousand dollars in trust with me for Wealthy. I carried out my part, and each year remitted to her the interest. Some years later I received a letter from her, stating that the farm must go unless the mortgage, amounting to the amount I held for her was paid. I sent, and cleared the property, but placed it in such a way that her miserable husband could not dispose of it. I have never heard from her since. Torrey grew more and more dissipated, and some five years since was killed while intoxi-

cated by falling from his horse. A sad story, daughter."

"Yes, sir, it makes me shiver."

But the judge went on. "You see, then, daughter, that I have fulfilled the written instructions of your mother, but I am obliged to say this does not comprehend quite all. When she knew that life was slipping from her, one of her last whispered words was—'Be kind to Wealthy.' I could not while that man lived, to be truthful, I did not try. But now, in these days, some way your mother, Jean, seems near to me. I suppose it is because I draw nearer to the meeting with her. And I would like to fulfill her wishes. Then, too, I have recently learned that her little home is gone; she burdened herself with debt to keep peace with him; and she has had to leave it, and is now supporting herself in any way that she can. And she is no longer young to begin such a life."

"Send for her, papa, at once; we will do everything that mamma would have liked," the daughter said.

That was how the quiet, little Wealthy Torrey came back, with her patient mouth, and the faded blue eyes that spoke of floods of tears.

Jean looked at her with interest for her mother's sake, and then forgot her in her thousand girlish absorptions.

It was nice to have everything, herself included, cared for, so unobtrusively but so well; and she never dreamed, how the shy, little woman, who so seldom spoke unless addressed, who was always busy about the house, or out of sight in her own room, was building up a temple of admiration and enthroning her there in place of her own lost, girlish ideals.

Jean came into her room on some domestic matter one day and found Cousin Wealthy sitting beside the window with a book in her hand. Jean glanced at it, and saw, with surprise, that it was a copy of Tennyson.

"Are you fond of poetry?" she asked.

Cousin Wealthy blushed. "I suppose I oughtn't to be," she said, "but you know I have never had any chance in my life to read much, and I was trying now to see if it would seem as it used to when I was a schoolgirl."

She had such a soft, liquid voice, and a pretty way of speaking.

"And can you make it seem the same?" Jean asked.

"No, no. Forty-five does not have the same outlook as twenty; there is not the hope in it," a little sadly. "But the beauty is there all the same. I am glad of that."

When the judge went away from them so suddenly, Jean felt the love and tenderness,

and recognized too, that, under the quiet seeming of this woman, there was yet much of force and strength.

So to-night, when she wanted some sympathetic and practical helper, she said,—“There is Cousin Wealthy.”

Going in, she found Cousin Wealthy busy in closing blinds and doors for the night. “Can you stop with me a little while? I would like to talk with you,” she said.

“Certainly.” They were in the library, and Wealthy sat down on the edge of one of the large chairs in her shy way, and Jean dropped herself into her own little red chair. She always insisted that her best thoughts, if she had any best, came to her in that chair.

Now Jean had not the slightest idea of the way in which her older relative regarded her. That she was a good friend of hers she felt in that subtle manner, that sense of comradeship, that comes between two persons, and cannot be explained.

But of the intense admiration, the delight at being just a part of her surroundings; why! Jean would have laughed outright at the thought. She was not a vain girl; not given to self-admiration.

But it was a little hard to begin after all. Her thoughts were not classified yet. She

took the thought nearest and told the baby's story. She had spoken of it at the tea-table but had been interrupted. She was surprised now at the eager questions, and in response to them the story all came out, even to the holding of the little one, and the gifts sent to it. It did not seem like self-lauding, to such a listener.

"But the trouble of it is," she said at last, "of what use will this one afternoon's work be? There will be the same thing to go over, day after day."

"Yes," Wealthy responded, "she only lives one day at a time, same's the rest of us do. But you have helped through one day."

"That is so little; such a very little."

"It was all that was asked of you to-day, Cousin Jean; and after all, it will not be so little if the baby lives."

"Oh, I do hope that it will. I know that Doctor Lambeth will do his best. And the world is full of just such homes, I suppose, Cousin Wealthy."

"Yes."

"I used to think," went on Jean, "that all the suffering, and all the work, was in the poor streets of our cities. But, really, persons who are as ignorant of the laws of health as that Mrs. Parsons, may suffer anywhere."

"Yes, I have known many such in the country places. It does not make any difference where one lives after the ambition and the hopes are crushed out of one, whether in fine houses or poor ones. I guess life looks about as dark in one place as another. I have seen enough that I would like to do for, and I was never in a large city in my life."

"Have you? O, Cousin Wealthy, I wonder what you would say to what I have been thinking of. You know I now own the old academy?"

"Yes."

"I have been thinking of offering that to the Fresh Air Society, or some such, and letting them use it for their work."

"You would have to fit it up."

"Yes, but that would cost no more than a gay season at some fashionable place would, and if I wished I should think I could afford that."

"God would bless you in it, I believe," Cousin Wealthy said, so reverently that Jean felt as though a hand had been laid on her head, and told her further thought.

"I have more income than I can possibly use as I am living at present. Mr. Shearer says, lay up a part of it for a rainy day; and Mrs. Shearer, good soul," with a merry laugh,

"would like me to spend it, and my time, in making garments for the Hottentots. But I am just selfish enough to fancy that I would like to see it grow at my own hands. Some-way, Cousin Wealthy," hesitantly, "it does not seem quite enough to just stand and throw off one's gifts and then fold my hands and let some one else do the work. Does it to you?"

"'Tain't the way the Lord did, anyway. He went about doing good."

"I suppose," the girl resumed, "if I was out in things now it would seem different, but shut away, as it were, for a little while, has given me new thoughts. I went down and looked over the old academy to-day."

"Did you? I wish I could! I have never been in since I came back."

"We will go together to-morrow morning, and you shall tell me at which corner of the dusty shell to begin work."

"We will get Mrs. McGovern and Maggie Daily to cleaning at once," Cousin Wealthy said, eagerly. "Maggie was in the other day and said she only had one day of washing a week now, and Mrs. McGovern had less even than that, steady, and with her large family too. It will be a God-send to them."

"Why, how things work in together," Jean said, reflectively. "Begin one work, and it

stretches out in every direction, and draws in others, and helps. Society can never be a class thing after all, can it? I never saw it in that light before."

"We are all members together," quoted her cousin.

"What shall we do first, Cousin Wealthy?"

They talked long, the two, but when they separated at last, the girl laid her head on her pillow and was soon lost in happy dreams.

It was the woman who tossed in wakefulness, who watched the waning moon, whose heart was too glad to rest.

The woman who saw the dreams of her isolated, struggling years about to be fulfilled. "I have to think of others to keep from going crazy," she had often said to herself. And so she had filled her days and nights with plans for the helping of others. Plans that she had expected to be but as "idle tales." Was it possible after all that there was to be a part for her in just such work as she had longed to do?

And Jean did not know how God had been preparing a helper for her. How, through years of loneliness and waiting, the willful girl had learned to forget self, and think for others. Until to-night she was rejoicing to be a part, even a small one, in his plan.

CHAPTER V.

WORKING IN.

IT was scarcely past seven o'clock of the next morning when Dilly stood tossing her mane at the piazza steps. She was not as surprised a horse as some might have been. She did not belong to a family who lose some of the most wonderful beauty through over-sleep. She had been called upon to appreciate "a glorious morning" at more than one early hour; and perhaps she did; who knows?

She seemed to have more time than any one else just now for a long look back at the beautiful valley shining still in its freshness, the mountains still hiding their hollows in deeper shadows from the sun's penetrating gaze, and the smoky curves from the tall chimneys. The whistle from a noisy locomotive parted the air with its shrill shrieks, and in the trees close by the birds were yet swelling their throats in joyous matins.

But the people of the house had no time for gazing. Jean was hurrying back and forth on forgotten errands. Cousin Wealthy was giving last directions to Rinda, whose portly form

blocked the further doorway; and Mark and Wittie were trying to accommodate in the phaeton, a basket too large for the space, well filled with what seemed to be dilapidated garments.

"Looks as though I had turned old clothes peddler," Jean remarked, laughing, and trying to find a place for her feet that had never seemed large before. "Cousin Wealthy, we shall have to hang ourselves out."

"Never mind; I can curl up. You turn it a little and find a place for yourself."

"Wittie, you come as soon as you can," ordered the young mistress.

"La, miss! Wittie can go any minute you want her," from Rinda. "I guess I am equal to one house, AND presarving, too."

"Dilly went a little lame yesterday," observed Mark. "I'd look out for loose stones."

"Yes, I will," and Jean gathered up the reins and started off, laughing softly. "It's a chronic habit of Mark's to think Dilly has gone lame," she said, under her breath. "Shall we go and see the doctor first?"

"Perhaps so, though Maggie and Mrs. McGovern ought to be told if they are going to get in a full day."

"We will see them then on the way down. It is not much out of our way."

They took a little roundabout way to the lower town, and stopped at a small, unpainted house, from whose doorway a plump, pleasant-faced girl promptly presented herself.

"Sure, and I'll be glad of the work mesilf. Tom's that bad from a felon on his hand, and not able to work, and it's not much I finds mesilf. It's the good thing I call it that ye wants me."

"See Mrs. McGovern, then, and go up to the academy. We will be there soon," said Jean.

"I'll do that, miss, ye may be sure. And she'll be glad too; the poor widow woman, that she is. She'll bliss ye the day."

"There is a specimen of Irish warm-heartedness and sisterly feeling," Jean remarked, as they drove on. "Tom, her brother, brought Maggie over from the old country when the mother died, and she has been devoted to him and his family ever since. She turns in all the money she can earn for the family. And they have been unfortunate enough. Every sickness comes their way."

"Yes, and fortunate for us that she is such a neat, tidy body," put in Cousin Wealthy. "I couldn't stand her around if she was such a shiftless piece as that Mrs. Parsons."

"And yet, Cousin Wealthy," Jean went on,

thoughtfully, "I found myself wondering the other day, whether, after all, I blamed her too much. What has the poor woman had to do with?"

"Water is plenty enough," uncompromisingly.

"Yes, but they have to bring it up quite a steep little incline from the brook on the other side of the road."

"Well, I know what that is; I did it myself for years."

Jean felt like saying, "But not for seven children," but refrained. They were nearing the doctor's house.

He was beside their carriage a moment after they stopped.

"How is the baby?" Jean asked, eagerly.

"Living, that is about all. A hard fight."

"You have seen it this morning, then?"

"Yes," with a quick twist of the lips.

"You must have gone early."

"No, I went late instead."

"Late last night, do you mean?"

"About eleven o'clock."

"O, doctor! But then, I knew you would. And is it going to live?"

"Not in that place, Miss Jean."

"Where, then?"

"That is the question."

"Why not there?"

"Why, Miss Jean, the air of that place, not to say hole, is stifling. In those two small rooms eight people are breathing, and there are only two small windows for ventilation. Then all the domestic operations are carried on right there. The woman was baking some bread until after ten, and the heated stove was not five feet from the cradle. Think of that, with the mercury at eighty. Then, every noise disturbs its delicate, broken nerves, and there is seemingly nothing but noise. And yet rest and pure air are its only salvation. All doctor's drugs are lost with such surroundings. We are used to that. Poor air, and poor nursing, give us our occupation."

"Well, what can be done?"

"The Lord knows, Miss Jean, I do not."

"Suppose he provided a better place," Jean went on, slowly, "and good care, what would you say?"

"That he had better do it quickly, Miss Jean."

"Why, doctor!"

"The child cannot live twenty-four hours where it is. Why, the hills around shut off all breezes, and there is a constant miasma from that swamp nearly opposite. It is a wonder it lives at all. Given higher ground,

cooler air, and quiet, and there might be a normal chance for it. But, as I say, where is that to be found?"

Jean turned and gave a long look into her cousin's face, that in some way gave its mute answer.

"Would the old academy do?" she asked, turning back to the doctor.

"Do? Why, there isn't such pure air in the world as up there."

"All right; there it shall be before night. Cannot stop to explain now; a good deal of work to do first. You get the mother ready, and I will do the rest."

"But is the child able to be moved?" put in Cousin Wealthy.

"It is its only chance, and must be taken," the doctor answered.

"I will come for it, and all of them, you understand, doctor, by four o'clock. Now, Dilly, ready."

"We can do it, Cousin Wealthy, we must," as they drove on.

"Well, I guess four of us can get one room ready; though I did suppose the kitchen would come first," was the good lady's answer.

They drove to the general store next, and after a liberal order that would be brought in half an hour, went on, with two mop handles

and several brooms standing up between them and reaching up above the phaeton top. They met Max Levison on his way down town. He must be pardoned if a long stare accompanied his polite greeting. "What is Jean up to now, I wonder," was his comment.

They found the two women waiting at the door, and the key seemed to sing a merrier song than the other day as it turned in the rusty ward. "Here we come, here we come, to begin a new living," was its refrain to-day.

Cousin Wealthy's small figure descended promptly to the kitchen. The others followed. She was already rattling the dampers and grates of the range.

"I do not believe it is rusty inside," she said, peering in. "Looks as though there had been a fire here lately, anyway."

"Oh yes, there was," from Jean. "I heard Mr. Shearer say that they heated water here for cleaning the chapel, and for experiments, at the time of the summer school, and it worked all right."

Maggie was returning from the basement shed-room with an armful of kindlings. "And there's a nice little pile of sticks in there beyant," she said; "enough to kape us a day or two."

"I told Mark to order a load of stove wood

brought here this morning," returned Jean, peering into cupboards and finding treasures innumerable, in the shape of nicked dishes, tin-ware that only "needed shining up," and the like.

In a few minutes a bright fire was crackling and blazing, and the next question was, water to fill the new wash boiler that was to be on hand at the promised half hour.

"It can be got at the trough beyant," and Maggie looked over to a pasture near, where a stream wound down from the mountain behind the building, and was caught for the cattle in a hollowed trunk.

"We must have a man," Jean said. "You cannot lose your time and strength bringing water. I wonder where we can find one?"

"And it's Tom would be glad to do the waiting on us," from Maggie.

"But his hand."

"Oh, it's over the worst, it is, and it's haling now. And he's getting that restless, the house will hardly contain him. But it's in the boiler works he is, and he has to have the two hands iv him for the heavy hammer. But he can bring the water and do a hape iv things with the one hand. It's wonderful how cute he is."

"Go and get him then, Maggie. I think we can keep a one-handed man busy all day,"

and Maggie sped on her errand with shining eyes.

"Now Mrs. McGovern," to the quiet little widow, "you may take a broom and sweep out the dust of ages that this kitchen accommodates, while Mrs. Torrey and I are busy looking up what to do upstairs. Come, Cousin Wealthy."

They lingered a moment in the chapel. Jean crossed the room and lifted windows to let the summer air drift in. When she turned from her long look out, she saw her companion standing with drooped head beside a desk half way down the room. "This is where I used to sit," she said with unsteady voice.

"The whole room is a pleasant one; it must have been a pleasure to be a student here," Jean said; but she was thoughtful enough to pass down the aisle and out the door and up the stairs, and leave the one who was waiting with Memory alone for a little while.

When her cousin joined her on the upper floor, Jean was full of plans.

"Here are the rooms I think we must get ready for Mrs. Parsons and her flock," she announced. "See, this corner one has windows to the east and south, but the trees shade it just enough to keep out the heat. And there will be no miasm here."

"It could not be bettered," Cousin Wealthy

said, warmly. "What a beautiful, beautiful place this is, Jean." Then a little shyly, "You know, Jean, this building holds my little poetry of life."

"Is not life more prose than poetry at best?" Jean asked, quietly.

"I guess so, dear. Just as well perhaps," and then they were quietly busy again.

"I will make a list of the things needed here," Jean said, seating herself on the window seat. "Will this paper do?"

"I think it will," Cousin Wealthy answered. "I have been looking it over carefully, and I cannot find that there are any moths. These rooms are so high and have so much sunshine that no dampness or mould seems to have gathered here."

"And this buff paper with rosebuds on it and vines is pretty, if it is old-fashioned," went on Jean. "Can Maggie whiten it?"

"Oh, yes, Maggie is very good with a brush. I will see to that. There is a good closet here too."

Jean went on with the list. "Matting for the floor," she read aloud, "and a set of light furniture."

"Plain," put in Cousin Wealthy.

"Oh, yes, a bedstead, bureau, and washstand and some chairs. Is that all?"

"A window shade," from Cousin Wealthy.

"Yes, and a toilet set."

"Now, Jean," interposed her cousin, "I would not get breakable articles if I were you. Get a tin hand basin and a water carrier."

"Oh, Cousin Wealthy, my heart is just longing for some of those lovely sets at Atkins'. Blue and white, or pink and white, with lovely trailing vines that make one think of green woods and shady places. Don't you think I ought to make the influences of the room elevating?"

"It will not be elevating to your disposition," grimly, "every time you come here to find a new nick or crack in your trailing vine pitcher or a three-cornered piece gone from the bowl."

Jean laughed merrily. "Stern prose, you hold me to that I see, Cousin Wealthy. Here goes, then, to my lovely dreams. Tin, painted tin, may I have that, at least?"

"Yes. Will you have any towels?"

"Loads of them. How I will enjoy buying them. I am a born shopper, Cousin Wealthy. The instinct within me is as strong as in any other Yankee to swap jack-knives. Anything else?"

"A small table to keep medicine and such things," her cousin suggested.

"Of course. And a lamp. And perhaps I will see something else in the store."

"Don't lose your head," from her cousin.

"No. And what answers for one will serve all," Jean went on.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, that I may as well order for more than one room at once."

"Then you are going to fit up more than one?"

"Even Mrs. Parsons' family would find it rather contracted quarters to all crowd into this one, would they not?"

"I presume so. I had better be at work then." And Cousin Wealthy bustled off for a broom.

"Dear Master, make the work thine," whispered the girl in the window; then she too went off for business.

It was as she had said, Jean loved shopping. Perhaps it would not have given as unqualified pleasure if she had not known that the credit at the bank was a long one. As it was the morning seemed radiantly shining as she drove to Atkins' large and well-filled store. Its three floors never looked more tempting. But it was not the silk upholstered chairs, or the newest divans, she was seeking.

"Show me plain chamber sets of three pieces;

light wood to make a room cheerful," she said to the proprietor, who came in person to wait upon her.

He wondered a little at first, but when he saw how the list grew, heard orders for four sets at once, for three pieces of floor matting, for pillows and bedding, for tin and dishes, for tables and lamps, and, indeed, for every kind of household goods, his curiosity deepened, until when the order was given for all to be sent at once he ventured a question.

"The old academy? Allow me to ask, Miss Hallock, if you are about to begin housekeeping?" with a quizzical glance.

"No, and yes, Mr. Atkins. Really, I am going to make a home for a little while for some who may not be so fortunate as to have such a pleasant place," Jean explained. She had made up her mind suddenly that it would be better to state the matter clearly, rather than to have all kind of reports and guesses flying about. And, of course, she could not keep people from wondering.

Mr. Atkins was grave at once. "I am very glad to hear that, Miss Jean. Consider me pledged to assist you all in my power." And in the summing up of the bill, that was made soon after, there was a liberal discounting.

Jean drew her check for the amount at once.

"Father used always to say, 'Pay as you go, and then there will be no surprises,'" she quoted.

"Your father was a good man," said Mr. Atkins; "I wish there were more of his kind." How the girl's heart swelled with joy.

"It is worth while to have the memory of a good father," she said so heartily that, somehow, Mr. Atkins thought of his own daughters.

"I will send on the things as fast as they can be loaded," the merchant said, "and what you find you have forgotten you can send back for; it shall be attended to promptly."

Jean found the academy in a whirl of activity and dust. The two rooms had been swept and mopped so as to be dry for matting. Maggie was sweeping the long hall; Mrs. McGovern washing doors; and Tom, with one lame hand, doing good work on windows taken out and carried to the kitchen.

"Have you come?" called Cousin Wealthy, emerging from a large china closet opening from the kitchen and dining-room. She had her head bound in a towel and flourished a damp cloth with which she was wiping shelves. "The next thing you want to put on your list, Jean, is mice traps. Of all the places I ever saw this is the worst. Thomas is going to mix up some soft soap and sand and stuff the holes as soon as he finishes the windows."

"I will that, and I'll be through soon," Thomas put in pleasantly.

"How are you getting on, Cousin Wealthy?"

"Oh, we have made a beginning. A beginning is a great thing. But it will be long before you see the end of the dirt. I am getting ready for the dishes now. Go upstairs and see how good it smells, Jean. If there is one smell in this world cleaner than another, it is fresh lime. The wall is not black, so Maggie only went over it once, over the ceilings in the two rooms. Is that right?"

"You know far better than I, cousin." But she went up, just to smell the fresh lime, and the fresh summer air sweeping through. There she found Wittie, too, engaged in the great work of cleansing.

One large load came and was unloaded and carried upstairs, and then it was dinner-time, and Jean and her cousin went up to try some of Rinda's good things. But Dilly thought her nooning very brief; it gave her no chance for a nap.

"Come and get Dilly and put her on the surrey, and have her back to me by half-past three, prompt," were Jean's parting orders to Mark.

The faithful man looked after and commented. "When Miss Jean took anything she

always did have it hard," he mused, aloud. "Mumps or measles or chicken-pox; and now it's charity, it's just the same. But I'm glad it's struck where it has, anyway."

The floors were dry by the time they reached the academy again, and tacks and hammers had been thoughtfully sent, so that soon the lively music of putting down matting broke upon the quiet noon hour.

"What in the world is going on here?" It was Ethel's merry voice and Jean went to the stairs to meet it.

"Come and see. Oh, I am so glad you have on your morning dress. Ethel, did you ever carpet a room in your life?"

"I have assisted at that high ceremony, Miss Hallock."

"Come and help me, then. I am aching to drive those lovely, double-pointed tacks, and Cousin Wealthy has Thomas to assist her and dares to say that she prefers him. You and I will take the other room."

"But what in the world are you doing? Max said he met you this morning with a broom upright for a standard, and Lucile said she saw a load of goods come here. What does it all mean, Jean?"

"Don't ask too many questions, that's a dear, but work lively, and I will gradually to

you a tale unfold that will make your heart ache. You remember the family we visited yesterday?"

"I could not forget the Parsons, Jean."

"And that dear baby is only just alive, Ethel. Which way should the breadths run, anyway?"

"Toward the door, of course, for sweeping. Is that baby coming here, Jean?"

"Providence permitting, yes."

"Bless you, Jean, you are a darling." And then they were too busy to talk much.

Cousin Wealthy heard the sounds from the next room. "I don't suppose they will get it down anywhere near straight," she thought, "but that don't matter half so much as to feel that they are doing something."

It was all settled, the room for the poor woman and sick baby, by the time that Dilly and the surrey were in waiting at the gate.

"Isn't it just lovely?" Jean said, pressing out a fold in the new towel spread on the washstand. "Oh, I am sure the baby will be better as soon as it gets here."

But her heart sank when, after a quick drive, she drew rein before the poor shanty, and saw the tiny babe brought out in the doctor's arms lying on a pillow. It was so small and so white, its tiny fingers like wax folded on its

breast; its closed eyes; it did not seem to breathe.

"I thought I had better be here to assist you, Miss Jean," the doctor said, gravely; his finger was on the wee wrist, and he spoke softly. "Now you get in there, Mrs. Parsons, and I will lay the pillow on your lap. Keep your arm under it and save from every jar possible. Jaky, sit in beside your mother and move this fan, gently, just as I told you. As for you, little folks," and he turned to the group of girls huddled together, "I will take the two smallest and Miss Hallock the next one on the seat with her; then you two older girls will have to walk; we shall go very slowly so you can keep with us. Jaky can come back with the express wagon for the things later. I will go ahead, Miss Jean, and take the side streets;" and so the procession set off. Jean did not speak often. It seemed as though she ought to stop the speech of those they met. She looked back sometimes, but almost feared to turn her eye upon the baby.

The doctor was waiting for them at the academy gate. He reached up and took the tiny wrist. They all watched his face, and were relieved when he nodded. "He has done as well as I could hope," he said, softly, and himself carried him up the stairs to the

clean, airy room awaiting them. He gave them a moment to see, then turned all but mother and child out. "Now, if you wish your little brother to live," he said to Jaky, "take these children downstairs and out of doors, and show them that they must not come here, or make a noise out of doors; do you understand?"

"Ya'as, sir."

"See to it then," and the doctor went back to the room.

The mother had hardly seemed to look about at all, but sank at once into the one rocking-chair the room offered. Now Jean had pleased herself quite a little in the selection of this chair. It was a dainty, willow affair, with rolling arms and top, her "one extravagance," she admitted to Cousin Wealthy. Great was her disgust to hear the poor woman, after a little uneasy settling, say—"I wish I could have my own rockin'-chair to set in; it's handier, somehow. Can't Jaky bring it along with the boxes?"

"I suppose that he can," Jean answered, with unnecessary dignity.

Wittie came in presently bringing a cup of tea and a plate of bread and butter.

"Mrs. Torrey thought perhaps she would like something after her ride." Mrs. Parsons looked up with interest.

"It smells good," she said, and drank so eagerly that Jean forgave her former dissatisfaction.

"Where is Mrs. Torrey?" Jean asked.

"In the basement, Miss Hallock."

"Why doesn't she come up?" Jean asked, but Wittie seemed to be too busy just then to answer.

"I must go now, Miss Jean," the doctor said, "but I will come in again before bedtime. Now, Mrs. Parsons, remember, let the little one lie quiet, and not be disturbed at all; and give the medicine exactly as I have told you. It is the hardest matter to insure quiet," he added to Jean, as he stood near his carriage drawing on his gloves. "Where are the children, I wonder?"

They walked around the corner of the house together. There, on the further side, under a tree, the group of girls were gathered, braiding leaves.

"Come here, Linda," called Jean.

"I can't, ma'am."

"Why not?" Jean asked, going nearer the group.

"Cos, Jaky told us not to stir out o' under this tree while's he was gone, or he'd give it to us," and at the mention of this dire threat the group huddled closer together.

"Wish the mother had half as good government," the doctor said, laughing as they went back.

"Cousin Wealthy," Jean called at the kitchen door, and finding that vacant, went on to the dining-room. There, sitting in a low chair, and supporting her head on her hands, sat the object of her search, with a face pale enough to tell its own story of pain.

"Sick headache?" asked Jean. "Oh, that is too bad!" to the answering nod. For she knew that once in a while, those sore afflictions visited the little woman. When she waited for hours, with head tightly bound, pressed close to the pillow to still the throbbing; when it seemed as though a trip-hammer was pounding inside; as though every worry she had ever lived through, or every task there was to accomplish in the future, was running riot in her brain; and all she longed for was to forget, to absolutely know nothing for a time.

"We will go right home then," Jean said, "it is time anyway. Can you sit up to ride, cousin?"

"I must," Cousin Wealthy answered. To how many lives is a "must" the keynote.

There were a few more directions to give. Jaky was to have a mattress spread on the floor for that night; the others could get

along in the two rooms. Then Dilly, who was used to such indignities as waiting anywhere, in a way that must have seemed very purposeless to a horse that had never belonged to a lady, was turned homeward. "I feel that we have accomplished a good beginning," Jean said, as they drove on, "and you know Cousin Wealthy, one of your watchwords is,—'Well begun is half done.' Now, if that dear little thing, with the bird's claws for fingers, can only get well. But I do not think that Dr. Lambeth is very sanguine. Still, sick people do get well in spite of doctors." But Jean meant no disrespect to the profession. "Has your head ached all day, cousin?"

"A little, but I hoped to get rid of it."

"And you never spoke of it."

"No, why should I? If your trouble can be helped, help it; if not, bear it." But the voice was faint, and Jean was glad when she could close the door of the little lady's room upon her, and leave her to the longed-for quiet.

CHAPTER VI.

A NIGHT'S LESSON.

JEAN was wide awake that evening. Callers came in, lively young people from the hotel, who thought the country delightful, "just for a few weeks in the season, you know," but wondered how any one could "exist in Williston," through the winter months. They went away early, saying,— "What a charming person Miss Hallock is; so bright; and so cultured. She would be quite in place in the Back Bay. Wonder what she will do with herself? Left free, as she is, and so independently well off."

Jean had been over that question often enough herself. No one can say that she was not dwelling upon it now, after the callers had gone, as she was lingering again in the moonlight on her wide, back porch. "It seems wicked to lose all this beauty," she thought.

The night was very warm and still. Every leaf hung motionless. Not a shadow on the shorn lawn flickered. The long line of mountain-tops was outlined against a lighter tint of

sky. The bits of water, here and there, shone as polished mirrors.

The sounds were growing few and faint. Jean noticed a horse trotting sharply up the street. Then she heard the gravel of her own drive crunching under its slower walk. When she went to the steps at the end of the piazza the doctor's light carriage was waiting there.

"What is it, doctor? Is the baby worse?" she asked, hurrying down. "Have you been to see it?"

"Yes, just come from there. No, it isn't any worse; nor any better; couldn't be worse and have the breath of life left. Where's Mrs. Torrey?"

"Gone to bed with a terrible sick headache."

"Whew!" with a long drawn whistle.

"Why? What's wanted, doctor?"

"Some good soul, like your cousin, for nursing."

"Yes. Well."

"You see, Miss Jean, it's like this. That poor woman down there, she isn't overly afflicted with knowledge, and she has a mother's feelings, good and strong; but she is made of common clay like the rest of us mortals; and she has scarcely slept any for two nights. When I was down there just now I saw that she wasn't going to stand another night of

watching, such as that morsel needs ; she will go to sleep in spite of herself ; and if we want to save that bit of humanity, it must have the best of care to-night."

"And you do not know of any one to go for, doctor."

"I declare, I do not. It seems strange, but I could think of no one but Mrs. Torrey."

"And she cannot go, so I will," Jean said turning up the steps, "wait until I get my wraps, please, doctor."

"Hold on, Miss Jean, what are you talking about?"

"About taking care of the sick baby, doctor."

"Indeed! And what can you do?"

"Keep awake, and give the medicine. Perhaps as well as the mother," she added, demurely.

The doctor coughed a little, and "pshawed" a good deal, but Jean held quietly to her point. "Wittie will go with me," she finally conceded, and then the doctor yielded.

"Well, hurry up," he said, "and I will take you along. You see, just as I started out I met a man coming for me. Somebody, three miles out, has tumbled off a load of hay and broke a collar bone and bruised himself generally. What on earth makes men so careless I can't see," he grumbled.

"So as to keep you in business, doctor," Jean retorted, as she hastened in.

"Wittie go? Well, I guess she won't," Rinda returned, when the case was made clear to her. "What's she but a slip of a girl, anyway. AND what does she know about nursing? AND what protection would she be to you, I'd like to know. Here you, Mark, don't turn in just yet. You and I have got to take a walk. You just ride on, Miss Jean, and I'll follow pretty soon. I know how to take care of a baby. Didn't I help tend you, I'd like to know?"

And after all that was implied in that Jean could not object.

An hour later the two new nurses were installed in their places. But it was Rinda's capacious lap on which, on a pillow, the little one was finding quiet rest, while Jean with slippered foot, hovered near ready for any service ordered.

"Good land!" Rinda had said, when she entered the room, "now do tell which looks most like a ghost; ma, or baby? Now, you Miss Parsons, you just lie right down on that bed. Give me that baby, ef it don't slip out o' sight handing it over, and I'll tend to it. The Lord never give me any o' my own but I've brung up other folks', and you needn't be

afraid o' nothin'. And you, bub," after the worn-out woman had obeyed, "what you hangin' round for?"

"Why, Jaky is his mother's chief helper," Jean hastened to say, "and the baby thinks everything of him. But we will do just as the doctor has told us, Jaky, and do you go and lie down while you have a chance. I hope little Max will be better when you wake up."

But Rinda shook her head after the boy. "Small chance of that," she whispered. "Look at those blue veins; and it's nothin' but skin and bones at best. Think of growin' a man out o' such a object as that! though some o' 'em ain't much more to boast of even when they get up. Now, Miss Jean, you just sit down and make yourself as comfortable as you can; I'll keep him as still as I can, and let him have the little chance shiftless folks have left him," and the good woman began a soft crooning such as women, probably from the days of Mother Eve, seem to possess naturally, and to sway gently the capacious lap on which the tiny form rested; and gradually the plaintive moaning ceased and the child slept; fitfully, and with frequent starts at first, but gradually deepening to more quiet rest.

Jean had seated herself by the table and

was busy with a book she had brought with her. She had thought also to bring a hand screen, and had folded this around the lamp to shield its light from the little patient. At first she looked out frequently beyond her radius of light to the shadowed room, the dimly outlined figure slowly swaying back and forth with the spot of white in the centre. Then the quiet grew more intense, and she lost herself in the closing chapters of her deeply interesting book. The hands of her watch had twice pointed to the even hour, and she had risen and prepared the medicine prescribed, and they had given a little nourishment to the child; that was all that had disturbed the silence.

It was half-past twelve when she finished the last page and closed her book. Still so very quiet, and she found that she was growing sleepy; she rubbed her eyes, but the shadows only wavered more grotesquely; the air seemed close too, though they had left all the windows open that they dared; its oppressiveness tried her; she would go out in the hall and move about a little. Signifying her intention to Rinda by signs, Jean opened the door and had nearly fallen over something lying close beside it. "Why, Jaky!" she exclaimed, relieved from her first start when a

gleam from the lamp showed the boy's head resting as near as could be to the crack; fortunate for him that the door opened inward; "what are you doing here?" she asked, closing the door softly.

"I thought mebbe he'd cry and I could do something," Jaky answered, in his slow way.

"No, he is resting quietly," Jean answered, more patiently. "Haven't you been asleep at all?"

"No, miss, not yet. I was listenin'. Do you think he's better?" he asked, eagerly.

"I cannot say, Jaky, but this sleep is the best thing possible for him. Now you lie down again and sleep too."

The boy obeyed the first part of her injunction, and Jean turned away wondering that the hall was so very dark, and what had become of the moon that she was certain belonged to this time of night. While she waited there was a sudden jar upon the silence; a crash that roused the echoes from some far part of the large building. She had groped her way out from the long side-hall, and just as she reached the corner of the main hall a sudden burst of moonlight illumined the scene, showing the stairs near by, and flashing a thought upon Jean's mind. There were wooden shutters on the basement win-

dows and also upon those of the chapel; there had been a sound of breaking glass in the crash; one of the shutters had blown to and must be fastened. Jean was no coward, but she was glad just then that there was some one near.

"Jaky," she whispered, loudly, and in a moment the boy was beside her. "We must go down and fasten some shutter," she said, and as she went down the boy's bare feet pattered close behind.

She had not noticed how the wind was blowing until she opened the chapel door; she had not seen the clouds until she crossed the large room toward its western side; then she saw the dark masses rolling up from the horizon, and the wind almost swept the shutter from her grasp. "Get some papers, Jaky; there are some over in that corner; we will have to stuff this opening in the window. We are going to have a hard shower, I fear," she said, when they had succeeded in securing the refractory blind. The clouds were rolling higher; the moon shone out less and less frequently. "We must go and see if there are any windows open anywhere else."

"Do you mean a thunder shower?" the boy asked. Jean pointed to the long lines of light beginning to play around the dark edges,

and a faint, muttering roll just then served for answer.

"Oh, dear! and ma is awful 'fraid o' thunder. I wish we was down under the mountain, cos she's so frightened."

"I wish we had a lamp," was Jean's reply. "Only two lamps in the house, and both in that room. No, we must do as well as we can, and not disturb them as long as we can help it. Come, here are the stairs," and the two went from room to room as well as they could in the deepening shadows, seeing that all was safe and tight. At one of the windows Jean lingered a little; it was a grand sight there out in the night. Around the lone mountain-top the lightning was playing constantly now. It broke through rifts in the heavy clouds that were wrapping the sides of the mountain lower and lower. "Neponset will soon have his cap entirely down over his ears," Jean said to herself. Higher up the dark masses were scudding along as though pursued by an angry demon, gathering closer together, showing flashing gleams of light, while the low rumble was almost constant now and increasing in force.

For a moment Jean lingered, looking out on the grand scene with varying emotions. It stirred her pulses to quicker throbbing with its majesty, and yet the girl was conscious that

it was very dark about her, that the lightning and thunder were very distinct in that great, lonely building of many windows, and that there were few persons in it. What was it that whispered to her heart just then the words, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." It had been a favorite chapter of her Bible-loving father. How often, in times of questioning or trouble, he had read that at their morning devotions. She used to think, "Father has some hard point to decide," when she heard it. How well she remembered sitting in the little red chair one Sunday afternoon and learning the whole chapter. How pleased he had been when she recited it. "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night." Yes, they were strong words; they helped her.

"Ma'll be awful scared," Jaky said beside her, and Jean was conscious of the boy's quickened breath and that he had drawn unusually near.

"That is true, Jaky; and they will hear the thunder by this time. But God can take care of us," she added out of the fullness of her own heart, as they made their way back to the chamber. Another thought had come to her; Rinda, who was brave as a lion for anything

else, was a coward in a thunderstorm. She had been heard to say that she "Would just like to set on the North Pole a while, out o' sight o' thunder and lightnin'."

Jean began to feel that there was considerable responsibility resting on her. She opened the door of the chamber with a little hesitancy. A louder clap than any previous one rolled above them. A quick glance showed Rinda with grim, set lips, still slowly rocking in the low chair, the child in her lap turning uneasily as though disturbed. The woman on the bed had turned over and buried her face in the pillows. But when Jaky went up to her and said, "Ma, I'm here," she lifted a thin, white face toward him. "Give me the baby," she said, anxiously, "I'll put it down under the pillows and it'll be safe."

"Don't you touch this baby," Rinda opened her set lips to say, as the boy turned toward her. "He's got all he can do to pull through at best, and I won't have him disturbed for nothin'. Them's the doctor's orders, and I intend to obey 'em."

"He has had a good nap, Jaky," Jean said, as she held a spoon with a few drops of nourishment to the open lips. "See, see Rinda! that is the first time he has seemed to care for anything. I believe he wants more,"

as the baby opened his eyes and looked up at them, and then worked his little lips and tongue as though he had enjoyed it. "The darling! he shall have more."

The thunder crashed above them, the lightning played in at the unshuttered windows, the rain poured down, but the eager group within scarcely noted. The mother had risen and was bending eagerly over the tiny form; Rinda's face was one broad smile; while Jaky clasped his hands in silent ecstasy, as Jean again held the spoon and the liquid was sucked out and swallowed with feeble welcome.

"Now, that's enough," Rinda said, decidedly. "We won't kill him with kindness; wait a while now."

Baby turned his large eyes toward her, then slowly closed them and with a little sigh of content turned his head to one side and put up his tiny hand to his cheek.

"That's the fust nateral move he's made since yesterday morning," whispered the mother, "ain't it, Jaky? Oh! I guess he's goin' to get along now, don't you?" looking about eagerly.

"We will hope so. I'm sure he seems brighter, doesn't he, Rinda?"

"Time'll tell," returned that oracle. "Don't 'sturb him now a fussin' and stewin'."

So they grew quiet again. The woman lay down on the bed, and though Jean thought at first she heard a few sobs, she could not tell; she was certain in a few minutes, from the heavy breathing, that she was sleeping.

"Poor thing!" Rinda spoke in a whisper, glancing toward the bed, "I s'pose she's nigh about tuckered out; but she seems to set a store by the young one after all."

Jaky had disappeared to his floor couch, and Jean sat down again by the shaded lamp. The storm had passed by. There were fitful dashes of rain still against the window panes, as though some spiteful cloud sent back its protest; and the muttering of thunder sounded like low growling in the distance. But no one minded now.

A deeper passion than fear, one of the great common impulses of humanity, a fellow desire and longing, had driven out nervousness for self, and around the tiny baby struggling for its faint hold on life, their hearts had joined together in longing and prayer.

"It is strange," mused Jean, resting her head back against a pillow Rinda had placed on the bureau so as to form a cushion, "how much more I care for Mrs. Parsons and her family than I would have thought possible yesterday morning. I might have sent my order and

had these same things given to her, and been assured that she was made comfortable, and yet only felt a passing interest in the whole. But it would just about break my heart now to have that baby die. Ever since I washed his little face, and he looked up at me so pitifully, as though beseeching me to help him, it has seemed to me that I must have him live. And the mother! I only thought of her as a poor, shiftless piece, who must expect work and trouble. Seemed as though it belonged to her. But I look at it differently now. It must be, that doing the little, common things for others with one's own hands, gives a different feeling about it. Why, even Jaky's stolid face is becoming a pleasant one to me. Was that what the Master intended, I wonder, when he came and lived among men? How much of that does he mean for us, I wonder?—for me?"

Then her head sunk lower on the cushion; she was lost in dreams. When she roused again an early sun was shining over the mountain-tops. The baby was lying with open eyes on Rinda's lap.

"How is he?" whispered Jean.

"No worse, anyway."

"And you have been awake all night?"

"'Tisn't the first night of my life I've tried

it. His ma was pretty well beat out. She's slept like a log."

At sound of the low tones the door was pushed softly open and the faithful Jaky crept quietly in. Baby Max looked at him and then his lips curved to the faintest smile. Jaky had to get behind Rinda's broad back to express his emotions properly.

It was well that a knock on the lower door just then gave opportunity to vent his excitement. He came back soon, the doctor with him. The mother had joined the group and all waited anxiously.

The doctor held the small wrist a moment, looked at the parched lips, laid his hand above the heart, and then smiled graciously.

"Quite as good as I could hope for," he said, softly. "A better condition than last night. With good care and perfect quiet we may bring him through, and make a man of him yet." What was the reason that Jean had to turn away to the window so quickly? Was it possible that she was glad enough to start the tears?

The doctor carried her home, and it seemed to her that no morning drive had ever equalled that one. The sleepy quiet of the wide street was just beginning to be broken. Here and there kitchen doors were being set open;

smoke curled lazily up from newly kindled fires; every blade of grass glistened with dew; the well-shaven lawns looked almost to be spread with a hoary mantle; sparrows pecked for their morsels and chirped the latest news from sparrow-land; a child, laughing somewhere, fell as a fitting tone upon the air.

"I wonder why there is so much lost beauty in the world," Jean said once, and the doctor added, "If it is lost."

It was not until their cosy breakfast was nearly over that Cousin Wealthy heard of her "night escapade," as Jean called it. She had looked so pale and tired that the girl waited for tea and toast to give her a stronger hold on things. She was interested enough now.

"You don't tell me!" the lady exclaimed, "that you have been sitting up all night; you and Rinda, while I have been sleeping like a log! Well, that has been my way of life; sleeping while others worked. But I am ready for anything now, Jean; what's next? You will see? Well, you are not going down there to work to-day: I am able to do that; only tell me what you want."

"No, I have promised to take some friends to drive this afternoon. Mrs. McGovern and Maggie will be on hand early, and I have engaged Maggie to do the regular work there

right along as long as I wish for her; she is neat and a fair cook; I must get another woman for cleaning." And then the plans for work made the sometimes quiet hour for meals a lively one.

"It seems good to hear 'em goin' on in there," Rinda remarked, in the kitchen. "Sometimes they set like two mummies at their own funeral, just for lack of something to say."

"Yes, child," Cousin Wealthy was saying within, "the only really sensible way of working for folks, is a-working with them. Then your cream rises right as you go along. I don't attempt any great thing. I couldn't ever write a book; 'twould be like the old woman who begun one, and wrote, 'January and February,' and couldn't think of anything further. But when it comes to looking after cleaning and dishwashing, I've served my apprenticeship; and if the Lord'll count me worthy to look after things, and help you in making that old academy a 'place of refuge' for some poor, trembling souls needing it, I'll thank him, and be joyful all the days of my life. And you may count on me through thick and thin."

"I may depend upon you then to look after the work?" the girl said, with a beaming smile, and a feeling that she and Cousin Wealthy were coming nearer together than ever before.

"I'll do the best I can, Cousin Jean," Mrs. Torrey returned, "though it is nothing to boast of," she added, humbly. "Perhaps," she resumed, "the Lord is going to let me learn before I die that one can't size up their whole life from a few years in it. I used to think, when I was a kind of 'shut-in,' as 'twere, up on that hillside farm, poor health, no near neighbors, nothing, as I used to feel sometimes, but just God up there, that life was all through with for me, there wasn't any special need for me, with only one person in the world, and perhaps he'd be better off without me, and no place a-calling for me, and I used to get nigh discouraged with longing. And then I'd plan and plan what I'd do for folks if I only had the chance. I had to, you see, to keep from thinking about my own mistakes and disappointments till I went crazy. And now, look at me, and what a large place I've come out into. Here I am, real well and strong, plenty of time, and here's the Lord putting into your heart a chance for me. It does seem too much good for such a homely little person as I am."

Jean laughed merrily. "Keep excited like that, Cousin Wealthy, and have that lovely little flush on your cheeks, and those bright eyes, and you will lose the character you are

giving yourself for plainness. But you shall have your 'chance.' Here, and now, I appoint you matron in chief, and promise to keep you busy enough to satisfy you."

"What will you do, Cousin Jean?"

"What would you advise, Cousin Wealthy?"

"Seems to me I'd get rid of some of those cobwebs and that dirt in the rooms first of anything."

"Spoken like a model housekeeper, Cousin Wealthy. Go on as you please."

"Who are you going to bring there next?"

"Do not know; I am Micawber like this morning; waiting for what turns up. Seriously, Cousin Wealthy, when I began I intended to fit up several rooms and offer to the Fresh Air Society. Perhaps that may be the best thing now. What do you think?"

"Perhaps it will. I'll see to the cleaning anyway."

"And I will order furniture for four more rooms, similar to the others, to-day."

"That is enough; better not go too fast. It's better to 'Measure the water's depth before you plunge into it.' How much are you purposing to spend anyway, Cousin Jean?" Mrs. Torrey sometimes came out with rather blunt questions; but Jean only laughed.

"I suppose I shall be wiser by and by,

Cousin Wealthy. All I can say to-day is, enough to make the Parsons comfortable."

"Don't make paupers of them, Jean. That shiftless father may come back yet."

"Oh! no fear of that! Mrs. Parsons wouldn't see him if he did."

Mrs. Torrey smiled; perhaps she knew more than Jean of a wife's blindness.

"Well," Mrs. Torrey resumed, after a moment's musing, and in a half-shy manner, "how would it do to say you would follow in the lead of Samuel, when the Lord called to him in the night?"

"What! and say, 'Here am I,' Cousin Wealthy? I suppose that would be the safe way; only, you know, we so seldom really think it."

Jean went up to her own room and dropped into an easy chair beside the window that commanded all the magnificent valley view. "Royal!" she said to herself, gathering it into her glance; "how city girls would enjoy this! I must write to the Fresh Air Society to-day."

Then she took up a little volume of poems lying on the table. She always kept several there. "I make it a rule to put some poetry into my life each day," she had written a friend a few days before; "I want to keep my life in harmony with beauty, and I find nothing that

more elevates my thought and inspires my best enthusiasm than a good poem."

It was only natural this morning that when she came across the expression of her own thought it should arrest her attention.

"This just voices my sentiment," she said, and read again and again, until the words were quite her own :

"If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain ;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his mate again,
I shall not live in vain."

"That seems small enough even for my weakness," the girl thought, "but I could never have said it like that." And yet there had been times in her life when Jean had ventured upon rhyming.

CHAPTER VII.

INTERRUPTIONS.

THE days of another week had slipped quietly by when we meet Jean again at her breakfast-table.

They had not been entirely unfruitful ones measured by the "old academy" standard, the only one Jean possessed now. Much had been done in that historic building. Under Mrs. Torrey's active supervision, and with such helpers as Mrs. McGovern, Maggie, and one-handed Tom, order was evolving itself from dust and chaos; and it had been with somewhat pardonable pride on the previous day, Jean had escorted Ethel Nye, who had been out of town for a week, about the building to see what improvements had been made.

"Aren't these halls clean?" she asked; "I assure you, there has been almost water enough used on them to turn a mill. Mrs. McGovern is a good scrubber. One of the first things done was to repair the large cistern; it was not so bad after all, and fortunately since, there have been two nights of rain and filled it nicely. Now see my rooms;

six in order; two for the Parsons, Jaky still a wanderer, one for old Lady Bly, and three waiting—who knows for whom?”

“Oh! that must be such a delightful excitement, Jean; to be doing something good, and not know for whom. Do you think it will be children? It is just lovely to do for children. They seem to appreciate it so much more than older persons.”

“I hope so, though the Fresh Airs say it is rather a long distance to pay fares; and they want to go out in parties too of twenty or more, and I am not ready for so many just yet.”

“Of course not. Who is old Lady Bly?”

“Oh, just one of the dearest old ladies! She lives on one of the Mill streets with a stepson. I have taken her for a month. Doctor Lambeth found her for me. She is seventy-five years old, and I fancy the son's wife is not very kind to her; there is a baker's dozen or less of children, all like a set of shallow stairs. She is quite lame from rheumatism, walks with a cane; but she has the most patient face you ever saw, and she seems so happy here.”

“She cannot get down stairs then?”

“Oh, no! but then that educates the Parsons, don't you see? Mrs. Parsons says it seems as though her own mother, who died

when she was nineteen, had come back to her. And as for Jaky, he would count it a pleasure to walk, I cannot say run of Jaky, both feet off in her service. Just look in on her."

Jean opened a door and the two girls went in to the neat, tidy room. There sat the peaceful-faced old lady, quietly moving an old-fashioned feather fan over emaciated Baby Max lying on the bed. On a low box the second Parsons girl was sitting, intent on a picture book.

"Where is Mrs. Parsons?" asked Jean, softly.

"Down doing a little washing, and Jaky is helping her, and Martha is here to walk for me if I need her."

"How is baby?"

"Oh, he is improving; slow, but steady, I think. He is beginning to notice things."

"And are you feeling better, Mrs. Bly?"

"The Lord be praised, yes. And everybody's so dretful kind to me," with a tremble in her voice.

"I'd like to know how anybody could help being good to that saint!" Ethel exclaimed, indignantly, as soon as they were back in the hall.

"It does seem strange, doesn't it? But they say her daughter-in-law is a hard woman, and

doesn't believe in 'pious talk,' any way. As long as the old lady was of use to her she endured her, but since she has become lame there is no peace for her. The son drinks, too, at times. The doctor said she could not last long without some rest and good food; so here she is."

"And all working like a 'happy family' in a museum, Jean," Ethel returned, lightly.

The girls lingered for a little in the swept, if not "garnished" chapel, talking of the "yet to be."

"You still have Tom, I see," Ethel remarked, looking out on the grounds, where a man with one hand bound up, was running a lawn mower.

"Yes, and I expect to keep him. Tom is left with one stiff finger for life, so that he cannot handle his heavy hammer again. The doctor says that he is pretty well broken down for hard work any way. But he is the most faithful fellow you ever saw, or, say as faithful as Maggie, and you have it, and as pleasant as the day is long. Just meets my need; so the wind 'blows somewhere,' you remember, if I am not the 'shorn lamb.'"

They examined the kitchen department, too, shining with new tins, fresh chairs, and well scoured tables.

"What a blessing it is that you have your cousin, Jean," Ethel remarked.

"Indeed I appreciate that; she is the oil that keeps the machine running smoothly."

"You make me ashamed of myself," Ethel said, impulsively, as they waited for a moment in the wide doorway. "Here you are doing so much, and I nothing; nothing, only just to look after my miserable little self. I am sick of it."

"Well, that is what I should certainly have been doing if papa had been here," Jean returned. "Dear papa, how he tried to make me happy. But I do believe, if I had been a little more sensible and unselfish while he was living, it would have made him glad. I know he hoped to make an 'Old Ladies' Home' of this sometime, but I never manifested much interest in it. I think of that when I look at Mrs. Bly; and, Ethel, you can help ever so much."

"O, Jean, if you only will let me!" with a little squeeze. "I am not a bit satisfied with myself, not a bit."

When Jean reached home that night she found a letter awaiting her that almost drove other thoughts from mind. While in her senior college year, Jean had contracted quite a pleasant friendship with a certain Lena Van Dorm, of Baltimore; a tall, graceful girl, two

years her junior and a class below; when through school this friendship might have dropped like many others, but it happened, while in Berlin and not very well, that she found Miss Van Dorm there also, studying German, and chaperoned by a sister eight years older. It is very easy in a foreign land to find mutual interests with one's fellow-countrywomen, and beside, Jean's beauty-loving nature went out in a thrill of admiration toward Dolly Van Dorm at once.

She knew of the younger sister's passionate fondness for her, and had heard her praises sounded by the hour, and when she saw she no longer wondered. Her story, too, so romantic; just what appealed to a girl's heart. Engaged at twenty to a naval officer, rapidly making his way up the ladder of promotion, who sailed away one fair day on the high seas,—and came back no more. Stricken by fever in a torrid zone and laid away on a coral island; that was the story. And Dolly had never forgotten. She still wore his picture close to her heart. She had directed that it be buried with her when she died.

But, aside from the romance, Dolly Van Dorm was a magnificent woman; stately, graceful, cultured; and then, how lovely and tender to her young sister's friend! And, after

the manner of girls, Jean had placed this older girl, this "woman of the world," on a pedestal and worshipped her. If Miss Van Dorm had any faults, Jean's partial eye could not discover them.

Since her return Jean had corresponded in a fitful manner with Lena, and the messages sent by the elder sister had been the choicest bits of the return letters. The sisters had tarried abroad most of this time. They were orphans, and their two brothers were settled in homes of their own. With abundant means and leisure, their one aim was "culture,"—and the position this would give them.

"I shall not feel as though I knew anything when Dolly Van Dorm gets here," Jean confided to Ethel.

"Oh, pshaw!" returned Ethel, who was of more easy going nature than her friend, "what do you care? Grandma says, 'Your friends must like you for what you are, not for what they want you to be;' and that makes things much simpler; don't you see?"

"Perhaps so; but I like to have my friends proud of me," answered Jean.

"Well! they generally are, cherie."

"But I mean clear through. Because they cannot help it. Because I am of use to them. Don't you see?"

"Yes, you always were ambition itself, Jean. Shall I keep out of sight entirely? or, do not your high ideas extend to your friends?"

"You will present yourself promptly, and look your prettiest, Ethel."

"Oh, yes! All anybody ever wants of me is to look my prettiest. Suppose that is all they expect, anyway."

"What cloven foot of ambition is that showing itself in your nature, I wonder, Ethel? Well, as your grandma is always saying, 'Behave as well as you look and I will be satisfied.' Only I really cannot imagine what I am going to do in this country town to amuse Dolly Van Dorm for two weeks."

"Does she have to be amused then? Grandma would say, 'It is a poor mind that cannot carry its own furnishings.'"

"You know what I mean, Ethel Nye," almost impatiently. "Here, they have been travelling everywhere, and seeing everything, for years; and what does Williston have to offer them in comparison, but hills, and quiet?"

"Should think they might enjoy country simplicity for a change," sensibly.

"Well, they will not. Who ever saw 'society girls' such as these are, that cared a fig for 'country simplicity,' or anything else simple?"

“Teach them something new then; time they learned,” and Ethel went off home.

Cousin Wealthy was no better when Jean showed the tip edge of her trouble to her. “Seems to me, Jean, if they’re folks worth having for friends in one place they are in another. I wouldn’t give a snap of my finger for having Queen Victoria a friend to me a-sitting on her throne, if she didn’t know me when she met me on the street.” With which republican sentiment, Cousin Wealthy too, walked off.

But, for these and sundry reasons, Jean’s sleep was light and broken that night. One thing that came across the spirit of her dreams was the north chamber. This was the large, square chamber over the parlor. While much of the house had been furnished over in modern style this had always been left to show the taste of previous generations. With dark carpet, heavy dark draperies, even a canopy bed. Now Jean felt, that to please the Van Dorm critical eye this must undergo an entire transformation; there was a week before the guests would come; she would go to the city in the morning at half-past eight, invite Ethel to accompany her, see what she wanted, decide, and purchase, and return at eight in the evening; and the result should be, “Just a

love of a room, too sweet for anything!" and perfectly suitable for the grand Dolly Van Dorm in which to rest her queenly head.

And after this was all settled, there was just time for a "beauty nap," before rousing the household to an early morning, and herself to a busy day.

CHAPTER VIII.

OTHER GIRLS.

JEAN HALLOCK made a very pretty picture that morning as she sat down to a hasty breakfast. It was intensely warm. The sun had come up over the mountain without even a filmy veil to hide it, and hung, a round, red ball in the sky; the dew was disappearing rapidly under its enticing warmth; the robins had sung their morning praises in the cooler twilight, and were silent now.

But Jean looked cool and comfortable in her white suit with its dainty lace ruffles at wrist and throat. Her father had always liked to see her in white, and it seemed to the girl a part of her mourning for him. Her hat was white, too, and drooping, but trimmed with knots of white and black velvet. And the kid gloves that lay beside her little plate were white, also, and heavily stitched with black; a black bordered handkerchief, too, peeped from her waist. But even these sombre tints could not dim the fair, girlish figure and face.

“A new shade for the hall lamp, you say,

Cousin Wealthy?" she asked, pausing half way through a muffin to make an entry in the tablet lying beside her. "Yes, I remember; it is cracked. Now, do you think of anything else, cousin?"

"No; and I fancy you will think your list long enough for this hot day."

"Oh, I shall not mind! Such fun to see pretty things, and to think that you can select from them for one's self. I believe I am a born shopper. Shall I match your silk to-day, cousin?"

"Oh, no, I shall not have it made up until cooler weather."

"Well, let Wittie clear out the north chamber to-day; I shall want to put the paperer and painter in as soon as possible; the academy must go for a few days; I must treat these friends the best I know how." And Jean stood drawing on her gloves, for Dilly had left the stable and was stamping the gravel at the steps, and Ethel's voice was heard in the hall.

"Good-morning, everybody. My, what a hot morning!" was her greeting. "Hope we shall not melt away. Am not late, after all, am I? Grandma hurried me off so, I am not certain whether I am the early bird catching a worm, or what."

"No time, Miss Jean, to lose," called Mark, and the two girls, in their fresh, rustling suits, sprang into the back seat of the surrey, and were then driven, in a quiet, respectable manner, down to the station.

"It is always I that must hurry, never by any chance Dilly, if Mark is the driver," Jean was accustomed to say good-naturedly.

"There is Agnes Storms," whispered Ethel, after a gentleman with true American politeness had given up his seat in the crowded car that the two might sit together.

"Where? Oh, there by the door! How thin she looks."

"Yes, she has to more than work, I suppose; her mother sick with nervous prostration; three children to look after; and papa says her father's salary is small enough."

"What does he do?"

"Clerk in at Esmond's. She joined the church at the time we did. Do you remember, Jean?"

"Seems to me so. What poor taste she has."

"Fancy she don't have much choice. That dark wool skirt she has on, I am mistaken if I have not seen that sharp-looking Mrs. Comar wear. Mrs. Comar is her aunt, and I suppose she must take her cast-offs. Jean, I have an errand of my own after all, to-day."

“What?”

“Why, Lucile found I was going, and wants me to go way up to John's silver store, to get two souvenir spoons, certain style and size, for a wedding present. Are you going up so far?”

“No; expect to spend most of my time in the house-furnishing stores. Go with me first and get me started, and go there right after lunch.”

“All right; I fancy I shall be ready for that; do not feel very well satisfied with my breakfast allowance. Grandma was prompting me to rapid work by one of her old axioms, ‘I don't suppose Judge Hallock was ever late at anything in his life.’ You don't know, Jean, what it is to have the models of a former generation continually held up before you; I wish our ancestors had not been so perfect. I scalded my mouth this morning at the memory of your father, and tore my glove over the shade of Aunt Lucy, who was a ‘model of propriety,’ and never went on the street with gloves half buttoned.”

There was never any use in trying to resist laughing at Ethel's merry banter.

The train rolled into the large station, that seemed cool under its lofty, arched roof. Everybody rushed out and off, as though impelled

by the largest amount of work to do in the smallest possible time. Our girls joined the hurrying stream, and soon entered the wide doors of "Heyster and Co.," first-class furnishing store. Jean was, as she had said, a born shopper, and though enough beauty was displayed to her to make choice almost confusing, yet she kept a level head, and by eleven o'clock her prompt decisions had crossed one after another of the "needs of the north chamber," until the tablet was almost cleared.

"So that I think you had better go for your spoons before lunch," she said to Ethel. "I want to think about two or three points before deciding, and I have some errands in at Whitcomb's, and will do those now, and meet you at Simcoe's for lunch at twelve-thirty."

So it was decided; Ethel took the trolley for up town, to her cousin's shop, and Jean went a block or two down to Whitcomb's, a large dry goods emporium.

As usual there was a "sale" there, and a crowd of course. It was very tedious getting her little notions, and the close air fairly shimmered with heat, and Jean's fresh suit was badly pressed in the crush. "I shall look like a beggar's wrinkle," she thought, shaking herself out in the scanty space allowed as she waited to go up in the elevator. We tell you

all this as you may be obliged to apologize for our Jean yet. And there are so many ladies who never seem to forget their right to such a "title clear," except at a "bargain sale."

But she looked wonderfully fresh and cool to the heated clerks in the suit room of the second floor as she stepped from the elevator, and came down between the loaded tables.

"I would like to see the white suits you advertise," she said, stopping before a recessed corner, above which was conspicuously displayed the legend, "Bargains to-day," and where three or four clerks seemed to be the busiest of all.

"Here they are, miss. What quality would you like?"

"The best, of course," Jean answered quite shortly. Did she look as though she would like anything else? And just then a fat woman, fairly steaming in her wool delaine dress, had reached quite around Jean's slender waist to finger a garment lying on the counter, and the various bundles with which she was loaded had poked most unceremoniously into Jean's side.

And she had not looked at the low voiced clerk waiting on her. If she had I am sure she would have noticed how pale and wan she was.

"These are the best, miss."

"These? Well, they are decidedly coarse; I would not think of wearing one: I don't see how you can offer them to any one."

Now the poor, pale-faced girl opposite had scarcely sent in a check that morning; she knew what would be said of her at the desk. And, perhaps heat is just as trying to a clerk who has been standing in it for four hours, as to any other girl. At least, this one was guilty of an indiscretion. She "answered back," for the first time in her clerkly experience. "There's plenty of nice folks that do," she answered just as shortly.

Jean raised her head, and lifted her eyebrows in surprise. "Impertinent!" she exclaimed, and turning, walked haughtily away; a floor walker obsequiously bowed, and turned aside; Jean scarcely noticed him. In five minutes she had found a place at the ribbon counter, and in the pleasure of finding "harmonious colors," and "love of tints," had entirely forgotten the unpleasant episode at the bargain counter.

"Twelve, twenty-five," Jean said, glancing at a large clock as her package and change were handed her, "must make haste to Simcoe's now."

She was a little rested by her wait at this

more quiet counter, and could see clearer. At any rate, as she walked leisurely down the aisle, her eye fell upon Agnes Storms, standing by a remnant counter, and looking closely with near-sighted gaze at a pile of folded pieces.

"How homely she is, and how tired she looks," was Jean's first thought. Her second, and not half as agreeable a one, stayed her steps instantly; while she fought one of the little battles then and there, that a true disciple must wage all the way along; and that are hard for girls, dainty girls, brought up to love beauty.

For, just then and there, a picture suggested itself to Jean. It was of Simcoe's shaded and cool restaurant, with its marble floor, its tinkling ice-pitchers, its trained waiters; and, at one of its small, oval tables with shining linen and polished silver, there were sitting, herself and Ethel—and this third girl? This plain, tired girl? who would, perhaps, have no lunch otherwise—who had promised to serve the Master at the same time that they had?

Ah! it was this that made Jean step so quickly, and her invitation, "Good-morning, Miss Storms. Will you come and lunch with Miss Nye and myself?" so cordial and smiling.

The girl looked up hesitatingly while a quick flush spread over the thin, pale face, but with such a light in the grey eyes! "Please do, it is just lunch time now. I am sure you can select better after eating."

"Thank you," Miss Storms said slowly, rising. "I cannot see very well," she added as they walked on, "I needed new lenses in my glasses, and my cousin, who is in an oculist's shop, said if I would come here he would fit me without charge; and father thought I had better come; and then mother saw the bargains advertised and wanted me to get a few things for the children. But I cannot have my glasses until three, and I cannot tell much what I am looking at without any."

"Perhaps I can be eyes for you after lunch."

"Oh, if you only would tell me about two pieces I was looking at, for Lottie a dress! I could hardly tell the blue from green. And I want blue, of course, for her light hair."

They entered Simcoe's large room; how cool it seemed after the heated street! Ethel was waiting at one of the side tables; if she was surprised at Jean's company no one would have guessed it. As for Agnes, it was a bit of Paradise to her. She had not expected any lunch except the bit of bread and butter folded

in a piece of newspaper in her shabby bag, and which she intended to nibble "on the sly" sometime, when the ladies' waiting-room was not very crowded. Instead, she was having a good, hot "dinner," as she would call it; coffee and all; and then ice cream to cool off with.

No wonder she thought Jean was right and she could see better when they got back to that remnant counter.

"This is blue, yes," Jean said, to the designated piece, "but it is a very sickly shade; and faded too in streaks."

"Is it for Lottie?" put in Ethel. "Oh, that isn't pretty enough for her lovely hair. She is in my Sunday-school class, you know; and just as cunning as can be."

Not even the good dinner had lightened the sister's face like that. If one is plain one's self how it does delight the heart to have a pretty brother or sister.

"Have not you something in this same quality and price, but a better shade?" asked Jean of the clerk.

"Perhaps so, miss; I will look."

The result was, that from some obscure hiding-place a "short length" was brought out and decided by all to be "just the thing." Then from the ribbon basket another purchase

was made. Ethel's quick fingers fashioned a bow or two from different widths of ribbon and shading tints, so that the slender purse was able to take advantage of reductions and have the longed-for pretty thing for the younger sister. Then the clerk found a box for the dainty bows and the girls separated.

At early evening of that day, a very crowded train drew out from the large city station, on its way north, taking in Williston and the many intervening stopping places "en route." Jean and Ethel were fortunate in coming early and securing a place in the middle of the car, where Ethel, who had a hard headache, leaned back by the window and closed her eyes.

Just at the last moment a crowd of girls, evidently working girls, came laughing and, with much loud talking, rushing up the steps and through the open door, and, for lack of accommodation, stood in the aisle, braced against the seats or swaying with every motion of the car.

"What does this mean?" called one girl who had come in earlier. "Where's your trolley?"

"On a block," one spoke up quickly. "Something's happened to the bridge; may stand still two hours."

The bell rang out loudly, the conductor called "all aboard," and with one groan, as though dreading its work, the long train rolled out from the gathering dimness of the great brick walls, and found that it was still brightness and sunlight in the open.

"Thankful we only have three miles to Lanesburg," said a girl standing just behind Jean. "Dear knows, I'm tired enough of standing all day without paying a railroad company for the privilege of doing any more of it."

"Hasn't it been just awful?" said a companion, flourishing a fan as vigorously as circumstances admitted.

"It has in at Whitcomb's, sure," was the reply. "And they always manage to select the worst days possible for 'bargain days.' Ought to have seen the crowd we had to-day. Mercy! if I had money in my purse, you wouldn't see me so anxious to save a quarter as to rush out with the thermometer at ninety in the shade, and work all day to do it. I'd lie still and go without, first, that's all."

"Ah, but you ought to see when we get up a sale at the ten cent store. Had one last week. Had a hundred cups and saucers for the drawing cards. My! didn't the ladies pour

in though! Nine deep, at my counter steady, and fifteen some of the time. And how they pulled and hauled! Great ladies them was. Faugh!"

"Say! Mame Edson fainted, up in the suit room to-day," put in another.

"Ain't fit to be there, anyway; just out of the hospital," returned the first speaker. "Discharged only three days ago."

"What is she in for then?"

"Says it must be that or starve; and she kind o' hates to do that, you know. Truth is, there ain't any place for folks just out of hospitals; and they're about as fit to work as a sick cat. The world's pretty crooked anyhow. Look at Mame! Ain't a better girl living; will work all day, and watch all night with a sick mate; and when her turn comes, must just work right along or starve. 'Tain't fair, anyway."

"Couldn't stand so long, could she?" asked another.

"I don't know; don't suppose she'd had more'n three courses for breakfast at that place where she boards; and then the heat. But the final upset came just before noon, when one of your fine ladies, all done up in starch and lace, didn't like what she showed her and spoke it out dreadful short, just as

though Mame was to blame; and she was all shaking with weakness, and she just sarsed back."

"Good for her!" exclaimed one. "Look at the way some of 'em talk to us. As though we hadn't any business with a tongue in our heads. Now, I've been at the lace counter three years, and if there's one place more'n another where ladies'll just show themselves out it's there. And I know something about lace by this time; and I can't bear to see a lady throwing away her money on what ain't the proper thing, but my! just let me put in a word of advice once; wouldn't I be told to shut up? and not over-politely, either."

"Never knew Mame to do such a thing before, though," resumed the first speaker. "She's as much a lady as any one of 'em any time, and got a sight softer voice than most. And the walker heard it, and I tell you he gave it to her, high and mighty. Mame never said a word, but when he'd gone she broke down and tried to cry, but fainted instead; and Miss Smith, she just put her down in the corner, and cushions behind her, and sent for a cup of tea and sandwiches."

"Did she stay all day?"

"Yes, but she won't stand it long. She'll be back in the hospital before many days, and

perhaps she won't trouble 'em to discharge her again."

The engine shrieked, the bell clanged, the brakeman at the door shouted "Lanesburg," while the revolving wheels creaked and the heavy train jerked itself to a stop; the crowd in the aisle moved toward the door.

"Was it an old lady that scolded her?" asked the other.

"Naw. One of your fine young sprigs; like us, only different; all in white with bits of black stuck around on her. Mebbe a widow. Who knows?"

Jean had idly listened to it all; it had amused her a little. But now,—when the sudden shock had had time to reach her entire consciousness, she was thoroughly aroused. Could it be possible that "other girl" had been herself?

She turned quickly, and almost rose. But that was useless. The train hardly waited for the last girl to step off before starting again, and the noisy, laughing crowd were half across the platform already. She could not tell which girls had been speaking, in any case.

With as thorough a disgust for herself as she had ever known, Jean sat down to "chew the cud" of unpleasant meditation.

CHAPTER IX.

SECOND THOUGHTS.

“FOR the land’s sake,” Rinda exclaimed to her spouse the next morning, after an early summons and message at their door, “what’s up now, I wonder? Young folks do beat all the world. They’re here one minute, and nowhere the next, a-disarranging everything. A dreadful pity folks don’t be born old to begin with;” and the good woman’s portly form shook with a mirth that belied her words.

But Cousin Wealthy, with her usual habit, kept her thoughts to herself when Jean again made her appearance at the breakfast-table with a fresh suit of white, and the “bit of black stuck here and there.”

“Away again this morning, Jean?”

“Yes, cousin. In some way I dropped out the best chance I had yesterday, and I am going back to see if I can pick it up.”

“Back before night?”

“I shall tell Mark to come to the two-ten. If possible, I shall be on that. And I may bring some one with me, cousin.”

“Very well. Shall I wait dinner?”

"No, I will lunch in town."

It was a more quiet and thoughtful ride to-day. In the early morning the train rushed along by the pastures where cows, their morning meal cropped, lay lazily napping under the trees; over swift brooks that tumbled down their stony beds; through quiet glints of woody spaces, until the noisy city was again reached. Here it was just as heated and dusty as the day before. Jean stopped by a group of children playing at marbles in a shade of about a yard square, and pitied them.

"Children ought to be brung up in the country, ef they don't have fathers nor mothers nor nothing else but grass and trees," Rinda had observed one day.

Jean thought of that now. "I am not sure but Mother Nature would do as well by them as the real mothers," she said, noting the pale, sickly faces, sharp and grimy.

The great store seemed close as ever; the air had not freshened much during the night; and the same crowds, Jean almost thought they were the same faces, greeted her as before.

But she was not interested in the counters to-day. She passed them by with a glance, and went straight up the stairs to the suit room. But once there, her step became slower, and at a little distance from the bargain coun-

ter where she had stopped the previous morning, she paused, and half concealed by a draped figure, looked beyond.

Yes, she was there; the young girl who had waited on her, not busy just at this moment, and leaning wearily on a pile of goods on the counter. Jean took a long look at her; noted that there was as much color in the white goods as in her pale face; and how thin it was; and the expression, the pose, everything, spoke of such utter hopelessness. And yet the mouth had sweet lines; and her voice, as she answered another girl, Jean noticed how soft and gentle it was.

"Is Miss Smith here?" Jean asked, presently, of a girl quite at the end of the counter.

"The forelady, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"Yes, she is. Can't I wait on ye, miss?"

"It is a little matter of business I would like to see Miss Smith for," Jean answered. But she did not assume the "dignity" that she would once have done; even took thought to smile at the girl. "Perhaps she was afraid some fault was to be found with her."

Miss Smith came promptly, with thin and rather care-worn, but very kindly face.

"Can I talk with you a moment alone?" Jean asked, and the "forelady" led the way

to a lounge in the furnishing department, where the two sat down.

"You have a clerk in your department by the name of Mame Edson?" Jean said, questioningly.

"Yes, miss ——"

Jean drew out her card and handed it to her; "I forgot," she said. "Has Miss Edson been in the hospital?"

"Yes, only out a few days since," with aroused interest.

"She fainted yesterday?"

"Yes; she is not at all fit for work. But she does not know what to do. She has been in the hospital for six weeks, and all that time the rent of her room has been running on; of course the landlady cannot hold rooms for nothing; and I fancy, after paying that, the girl had hardly a cent left. Her salary is not large at best and she is never very strong. It was only overwork that brought on neuralgia of the stomach, that was her illness, and now the doctors say she must be careful. But there isn't any place for girls called convalescent, they are sent out long before they are strong enough to work. The hospitals are not to blame; they must take the worst cases. Miss Edson boards as cheaply as she can, and of course there is nothing for a sick appetite at a

cheap boarding-house. I wished I could take her home with me, but mother, and an invalid sister, and myself all live in three rooms, and only have my wages to live on; though I don't know why I have told you that, I am sure," with a smile; it was the girl's eager eyes that had drawn her on.

"Thank you for it," Jean answered, cordially. "Miss Smith—I want to ask you—do you think?—that the floor walker's scolding caused Miss Edson's fainting, yesterday?"

Miss Smith looked at her in surprise. "How did you know that?" she asked. "No, I do not. Hunger and heat caused that."

"Because," went on Jean, frankly, "I was the one who spoke to her rudely, and then when she answered back I called her 'impertinent,' and he heard me, and I suppose went directly for her. I heard the girls in the car talking about it last night, Miss Smith, and I have come here to-day from Williston to see what I can do to make up for my thoughtlessness."

Miss Smith looked at the flushed, eager face, and her own eyes shone with feeling. "I should be very glad to have Mame find some friend," she said. "She is quite pretty when well, and, Miss Hallock, you girls safely sheltered in homes cannot know the temptations

that come to such. It is so hard to work day after day with nothing else to look forward to. I have been at the head of this department for ten years, and I have had many a heartache for homeless girls. And Mame is as good a girl as ever was; and I never knew of her doing a disrespectful thing before. But, Miss Hallock, the ladies who only make shopping a pastime cannot dream what the other side of it is to the girls who stand behind the counter, no matter how they may be feeling, all day."

Miss Smith was so evidently the gentle, refined lady herself, that Jean found her own heart going out to her.

"Do you think I could persuade Miss Edson to go out to the country with me for a while?" she asked.

"It would be her salvation, if you could," Miss Smith answered, warmly.

"But she will be too independent, you fear?" queried Jean.

"You cannot blame her, Miss Hallock," Miss Smith returned. "Their independence is all these girls have to assert themselves with."

"And could she be spared without losing her place?" Jean asked, presently.

"I would attend to that," the "forelady" answered. "It is mostly dull now, anyway."

Jean was thoughtfully silent for a few minutes, and then briefly explained the "academy idea," as Ethel called it, and what she was doing. "If I can get her to go there," Jean concluded, "she will find both rest, and change of scene and air."

"I should think it would be heaven itself," the "forelady" returned, so eagerly that a new thought sprang at once into Jean's mind. "Why, to have no care for one week even! and to know that somebody else was caring for you; and to have a yard, and trees, and mountains beside! I cannot see how any one could refuse it! I think your best way, Miss Hallock," Miss Smith resumed after a moment, "will be, simply to tell Mame just as you have told me. I am sure she cannot refuse you."

"Please send her here, then," Jean said. "I will try my powers of persuasion." But for the few moments of waiting she was not very confident in them. "I would not accept a favor from any one who had been rude to me," she thought.

She saw Miss Edson coming toward her at last. How pale and thin she was; and how slowly she walked as though weary even at that early hour. But the girl's face flushed, and her slender figure straightened when she saw who had called for her.

Jean did not wait for the other to speak; she held in her hand a beautiful, swaying bunch of La France roses, and as the girl hesitated, and half turned, she stepped to her quickly.

“Miss Edson,” she said, simply, “I have come here this morning to apologize for my rudeness to you yesterday; I had no right to criticise the things you offered me. Will you please take these roses, and say you forgive me?”

Mame’s hand went half out, then fell again. “Well, I hadn’t any right to answer as I did either; I never did so before; I guess I was too tired to know what I was saying,” and her voice trembled. “But I can’t take those handsome roses; I never had such a bunch in my life.”

“Oh, yes you can! And sit right down here and let me tell you what I have been thinking of.” And in five minutes more Jean found herself talking just as rapidly and easily to this strange girl as though she had known her for months; telling of the academy home first; of the Parsons tribe, from Jaky to the sick baby; of old Lady Bly; and of the rooms, ready and waiting, for new guests. And, if there had been any constraint in the other girl’s manner at first, it was soon melted away, and she said, as Miss Smith had done,

"How lovely it must all be!"

"You see," Jean went on, "when I first began, it was my idea to offer it all to the Fresh Airs; but of course they have to consider, and plan, and I am not sure but I shall constitute a society of my own and do the work without them. But I have wanted above all things, to give some girls this home, and rest, and I did not see how to get at them. Now, Miss Edson, if you will help me, I think I can do it."

"I! How?"

"By going out and growing strong there yourself, and then helping me find others. I have thought of one other already, if I can only get her."

"Who?" for Jean's eyes invited questions.

"Miss Smith."

"O, Miss Hallock, would she? I would do anything for her. She is so good, and she has such hard times."

"Do not say anything about that at present, please. Will you go home with me then this afternoon? and the rest will follow in good time."

And after a moment of hesitation Mame said, "Yes, I will, and be glad, too, Miss Hallock." And then her face was lost for a moment in the fragrant roses. "May I give these to Miss Smith?" she asked, when the

head was lifted again. "I will be having so much that I can spare them as well as not."

When Jean reached the station a little before train time that afternoon, Mame Edson was in waiting, though she did not at first see her, sitting in a shaded corner beyond the window, for two of her own acquaintances from the city chanced to be there to see a friend off. The four made a pretty group; in their trim, stylish suits, natty hats and boots, and dainty bags.

Mame Edson from her secluded corner watched them a little enviously, for, we may just as well admit right here, that a trifle of morbid jealousy had become ingrained by the hard circumstances of her life into this shop girl's nature.

As she noticed their well-bred manner, their quiet tones, she grew bitter. "I never can be like them, anyway," she thought; "they don't act as though they ever had a care in their lives. Nobody can seem like that that has to worry and work all the time."

Then she glanced at her own soiled, half-worn gloves, at her cotton waist so poorly laundered, and wished to the bottom of her heart that she had had the common sense to pull off the faded limpsy feather that adorned her hat, as she had thought of doing.

Jean wished so too when the bell rang, and Mame was obliged to rise and present herself. But it did not trouble her thought long. She put Mame in a seat by the window, sat down beside her, opened a box of bonbons, and then busied herself in pointing out the various places of interest they passed. When Williston was almost reached, the girl had grown very silent, and glancing at her Jean saw that her face was turned toward the mountains, and that now and then, the hand, from which the soiled glove had been taken, was drawn across the eyes, and she left her to herself.

"Around by the academy, Mark," Jean said, when she came with her companion to the surrey. "Will you go home with me a little while first?" she had asked, but Mame had said quickly—"No, thank you. Let me go right to my own place first."

Now, when Jean took her up the stairs and into the small, neat room next to Mrs. Bly's, looking off to the mountains, the girl's face took on a look of rest. "I haven't seen anything like this since I was a little girl, and used to go with mama out to grandpa's in the country," she said.

And Jean made her lie down, and promise to rest for a half hour, and then left her well satisfied with her own day's work.

“Yes,” Cousin Wealthy said when Jean told her of it, “if you’re going to do anything worth while with folks, you’ve just got to let them think they’re doing something too. That’s the only way to bring the best out of people. Let that girl think now, that she can do something for Miss Smith, or some of those other forlorn folks down there in that God-forsaken city, and you’ve got the whip hand of her, as men folks say. She’ll do what you want her to. Why, bless you, Jean, we all like to be leaned on ; every one on us ; it’s human natur’. Give these poor things that never have had a chance to do a rap for anybody else, an opportunity ; let ’em hear a ‘thank you,’ themselves, and you’ve done more for ’em than doctor’s pills or plasters ; a sight more.”

And having thus freely expressed her mind, Cousin Wealthy, as usual, knew the right time to stop.

CHAPTER X.

MAME EDSON.

IN spite of her intention not to do such a thing, Mame Edson fell asleep almost at once, with her face raised on the pillow to view the fair picture framed in by her window. She slept long and heavily too, until roused by the supper bell rung by Maggie in the basement. Then she followed two of the little Parsons girls to the supper-room.

Jean had had a partition run across the long dining-room of former days dividing it into two parts; the smaller of which, next to the kitchen, answered all present purposes of dining-room.

Mame was almost stupid after her excitement and heavy sleep, and her head ached, but the tidily-served supper of white bread and berries and chipped beef, plain cake and tea, looked and tasted refreshing, and she ate heartily. There was not much said. The Parsons children had been brought up in an atmosphere of repression, and the mother was too busy in attending to their material needs.

When the meal was over Mame went back

to her own room, and in the softly dropping twilight sank restfully upon her pillows again for the night. It all seemed like a dream still; those of the night could hardly be more unreal.

“Just to fancy! I never thought of such a thing last night at this time,” was her last conscious imagining. “How my back did ache then! Why, it seems as though I could sleep and sleep forever, with no dreadful store to hurry off to.”

Nevertheless she woke quite another person in the morning; with no headache, and consciously refreshed after her long rest. The bright sunlight seemed to be giving her a welcome, so different in the bowery greenness from that reflected from staring brick walls; and every drop of dew twinkled up to her its welcome. There was an “at home”-ness about things this morning. She said “Good-morning,” to Mrs. Parsons, and smiled at the youngest girl when she and her plate nearly fell off their chair together; and nodded so brightly to Jaky when she met him coming out of Mrs. Bly’s room with a plate, that the boy, who was rather susceptible to pretty things, forgot to move, or close his mouth, for at least a minute after.

The first thing that she did after putting

her room in order was to sit down by the window, hat in hand, and remove the faded feather. "I don't know why," she mused to herself, "that all seemed well enough in those dusty streets, and just going out in the evening to some crowd, but it looked dreadful common after seeing Miss Hallock's hat with just those knots on it. And yet they had the air. And here, when you look at the green outside and then at this, it just makes me sick. I wonder if there are many more rich girls like her, anyway?" Then to a train of thought that was not made audible, she added—"I guess if there were, there wouldn't be so many silly poor girls, so there." And the hat in its relieved plainness was placed on her head, and the girl walked downstairs and out the front door. The lower step was warm and yet shaded, and she sat there for some time, watching Tom, who was busily clipping the edges of the graveled walk.

"I suppose I may as well have a good time while I can," the girl thought; "they don't come very often in my life, that's sure. What makes you so particular about cutting every blade just so even?" she asked the man, presently.

"The missus likes it so," Tom answered, simply.

"I wonder if she must have everything just as she likes it? the rest of us don't," with a little of the old discontent rising within her.

She got up and went around the long building. There was a shadow on the morning brightness now.

Under a spreading tree at the back four of the Parsons girls were playing. Mame went and sat down beside them. They had a large leaf partly filled with overripe, juicy berries, that they were stringing on long grasses and then bending into circles and tying.

"What are you doing that for?" Mame asked.

"To give to Miss Hallock," the oldest one of the group answered. "Here, you Tilly!" to the baby, "don't you eat a single one. You have a'ready," pointing to the telltale stains on lip and chin.

"Why not let her have them?" interposed the newcomer. "Miss Hallock can get all the berries she wants, I guess."

The child looked at her wonderingly. "'Tain't that," she said. "It's 'cause she's give us lots, and lots, and we want to give her something back; Hattie and I do, don't we, Hattie?"

"Yes, we does," piped the next in order.

"'Sides," went on the first speaker, "Jaky

told us to do it; and some of 'em's for Ma'am Bly, too. Tilly oughter be 'shamed, so she had." At which the offending babe set up a wail of despair, joined in by the next larger, until Tryphena, with a glance at the stone walls of the house as if to see if they had ears, hastily dropped her dripping string, and reaching out her deeply dyed fingers, gathered into her embrace the two weeping penitents, unmindful that a string of the jetty fruit was also held in the crushing embrace.

When quiet was restored and peace had settled upon all parties, Mame resumed her questioning. "Do you have good times here?" she asked.

"I guess we does," returned Phena. "Why, we has enough to eat all the time."

"And didn't you before?"

"I guess not often."

"Why, I didn't know that people ever went hungry in the country," Mame returned, in surprise.

"Well, they does then, don't they, Hattie? And dad licked us, too, didn't he, Hattie?"

"Is your father dead?" asked Mame.

"Don't know. Hope so," was the filial wish, "don't you, Hattie?" to which an emphatic nod was the answer. "Anyway, he's cleared out, 'cut sticks,' Mrs. Carr says, but I

don't know where, I'm sure; he never cut many to home; Jaky had them all to do, didn't he, Hattie?"

"After all," thought Mame, with an amused smile, "there isn't so much difference between children wherever they may live. What is your name, sissie?" she asked of the baby of the group, who, released from her sister's embrace, sat now bolt upright, with china blue eyes staring amid the pasty surroundings of berries, and dust, and tears, her flaxen hair, like a dulled aureole, framing the whole.

"Her name is Matilda Maria," volunteered the maternal sister.

"And mine is Aunt Roxy," piped up the next, "and I is four years old last May."

"What does she mean?" asked the questioner.

"Oh, she has heard ma say she was named for Aunt Roxy, and so she always says that is her name," was the explanation.

"And yours is Hattie?" Mame said to the second, and prettiest girl, who only smiled shyly in return.

"Yes," again from the eldest, "and mine is Tryphena Lovisa, for my two grandmothers; and there's one more, Belinda; she's the biggest of all; and then there's Jaky, and Max."

"Quite a family of you," Mame said, rising. "I guess I will go and walk now."

"We'd go with you," Phena returned, graciously, "only Jaky told us not to stir out from under this tree after we'd got our berries, and we dass'n't."

"All right! I'm thankful to Jaky, I am sure," she added to herself when safely beyond hearing.

Behind the academy the ground rose steadily, and more and more steeply, through three or four fields, until it was lost in the fringing edge of bushes that marked the mountain proper.

From this point rose the bold and lofty outlines of the single mountain, a landmark for many miles, covered from base to summit with thick woods, that, in the fall time, would be one magnificent blaze of glory, but now, was only varied by differing shades of green.

Mame found a mossy hollow among some rocks, just within the green line. Near her, a tiny stream tumbled over its stony bed. A little way to her right was the carriage road that wound up to Table Rock, a rocky ledge half way up the slope, and then on to Summit House, a favorite summer resort on the tableland at the top, with its croquet grounds and ten-pin alley. She could hear the frequent

tramp of horses' hoofs now, and the merry voices of pleasure seekers.

But aside from these, few sounds broke the stillness of that upper world. Some men were at work in a field below but she could not hear their voices. A hazy mist, like the filmiest of veils, just softened the sun's rays, and the outlines of distant buildings.

It was just the morning, when, if one has a mind well stored with poems, they will drift naturally to the thought.

Unfortunately, Mame Edson had not. She had been brought up amid the sternest prose of life. Her mother had run away from a country home when only nineteen years of age, and married a city clerk in a small store. The glamour did not last long; his fashionable clothes and city airs had fascinated her; she found they covered the selfish and dissipated image of manhood. Her parents died, and she had no refuge to turn to, when he grew abusive to her, and Mame, their one child. She had not many tears to shed when he died from a fever in the hospital. She had to save her eyes for the close sewing on collars that kept the two left from starvation. But she was a slow workwoman, skilled in nothing, and had little time or strength to give to the training of her child. Mame grew up with

little schooling, and at an early age went into a store as cash girl. Her mother died while Mame was still in her teens, and she had been alone since. From her father she had inherited her pleasing manner and voice; from her mother's ancestors, more real character than either parent had possessed; though it had had no opportunity of development as yet. Now, the spirit of poesy, that is a dreaming mood, came over her.

She wondered idly, how it would seem to have no other aim in life than just to follow out her own fancy as she was doing this morning. She looked at her hands folded in her lap, and turned them over and smiled at them. "I am glad you are having one good time in your life," she said to them. Then she took the pins from her hair, and shook out the pretty, brown coils, and threaded them with her fingers. "You may hang there," she said, "and let the sun kiss you for once, and the wind blow through you." It was the spirit of poesy and of nature, speaking in the long starved heart.

"Oh, I wish I could take you all in!" she said once, stretching out her arms toward the wide reaches of valley and hill. "I wish! I wish I could carry you back with me!"

It was the same feeling that a highly cul-

tured girl has when she stands before one of the great pictures that has moved the world, and stirred the depths of her own heart; the same longing to carry with her its gift and blessing.

Once she leaned her head against a tree trunk and fell asleep, and woke with a start, and wondering,

“How hot it is in the store now,” she thought, as the sun neared its zenith, “and how tired everybody is getting. And I suppose I have got to go back to it in a few days again. I don’t know as there was any use in my stopping; it will be all the harder going back again. Oh, I can’t understand it! I can’t,” as a trill of girlish laughter came to her ear from the carriage road, “why some have all the good times, and some, none;” and her head was bent upon her hands, and the hot, bitter tears came thick and fast, and the slender figure shook with sobs. But only for a moment. No one could long resist such messengers of beauty about her; and youth is hopeful. Thank God for that.

“It’s only because I’ve been sick and am not strong yet,” she apologized to herself with lifted face. “I did not use to feel like this. I’ve had lots of good times in the store; and fun in the evenings, too,” a little more slowly.

"And I guess I should think it was poky enough if I had to sit around like this all the time. And so still, too. My! Kitty James would have a conipation fit in no time to be in such a still place. But I'd better be going, I guess; that Maggie said they had dinner at twelve; and I fancy I'll be hungry enough for it."

She rose, then stooped again to pick up her handkerchief, and as she lifted herself was aware of a rustling in the bushes near, that made her start, and turn quickly. There, not ten yards from her, stood a man; a seedy, unkempt, trampish specimen; Mame thought quickly of the men at work in sight.

But her neighbor did not seem anxious to disturb her. Only to get out of sight. He bent his face quickly away from her, and pulling aside some bushes, was lost at once among their foliage. And Mame, with quickened step, turned down the hill.

"Do you have such things as tramps around here?" she asked of Mrs. Parsons whom she found just sitting down to the dinner-table.

"Why, yes, I used to see them down on the mountain road sometimes."

Then Mame recounted her adventure, to which the mother gave what attention she could with the many clamoring on her. But

as Mame ended, "And isn't it funny, how you will notice some little thing? Now, this man, when he turned, I noticed he had a patch just as grey as could be, on the elbow of the blue military coat he had on; some old soldier, I suppose."

She wondered at Mrs. Parsons' sudden animation of manner, and the quick question that followed. "What sort of a looking man was he, Miss Edson?"

"Oh, a slim, limpsy sort; looked hungry and dirty, as much as anything; and carried one arm like this on his hip, as though stiff. Did you ever see him, Mrs. Parsons?"

"No, of course not; 'tain't very likely," with a return to her indifference, and to the children who had been engaged in a lively contest while their mother's attention was elsewhere.

"Ma, you've buttered both sides of Hattie's bread to wonst, and mine not at all," complained Phena, in a whining drawl that seemed natural to all. "Where's Jaky, ma?"

"He's a doing for Ma'am Bly."

"He said he'd make me a cart some day; and he went away and didn't come again at all," put in Hattie.

If Mame had had other company she would probably have held herself above the ignorant

Mrs. Parsons and her untidy brood, but as it was, they amused her, and she found herself promising to make a body for a doll, lacking in that important part, "sometime."

"I hope it won't be one of Jaky's 'sometimes,'" remarked Phena, in an audible whisper.

But the walk and the sun had been too much for her, and once in her own room, Mame's only wish was to shut the light entirely out, bind her aching head in a wet cloth, and place it as low as she could among the pillows. And again the blessed restorer, sleep, that the worn-out girl so sadly needed, saved her. "I should have been back to the hospital by this time, I guess, if I had stayed in the store," was her last conscious thought.

Just before supper time she roused herself and went to the kitchen to fill her pitcher.

"Miss Hallock came to see you this morning whiles you was out beyond," said Maggie.

"She did? Oh, that was too bad!"

"Yes, and she was that sorry, too. She left word she couldn't come again to-day, 'cause she was going out, but she hoped you was feeling better, and she'd be seeing you soon. And she lift some books for ye; I wint to your room this afternoon with thim, but you did not hear me knock, and whin I saw

the room was dark I thought it was aslape ye were, and I'd not disturb ye."

"Yes, thank you, I was asleep. Are these the books?"

"Yes, miss; I'm sorry I forgot them the noontime."

Mrs. Parsons was not at the table when Mame answered the supper call, after having found time for one entrancing, short chapter of "Faith Gartney." "Where is your mother?" she asked of Linda, the most overworked and browbeaten member of the Parsons family circle. Stoop-shouldered from lifting the many babies, hollow-eyed, shy and shrinking, Mame felt a pity for the child who seemed to have known no childhood, every time that she looked at her.

"Max was cross, and Ma'am Bly had a bad turn of roomatics," was the comprehensive answer. And just then Jaky made his appearance; but it was Jaky made over; with a quickness of step seldom seen before, and, actually, a smile upon his usually solemn face.

"Where's ma, girls?" he asked, and the same explanation being given, buttered his bread in silence for a moment. Then lifting his eyes to Mame, he said, gravely, "I've got work, Miss Edson."

"You have? I'm glad," Mame answered,

with the quick sympathy of one who understood what that meant. "Where?"

"With the grocer, Martin, down town. He'll give me fifty cents a day," with an air that made his sisters exclaim, "Oh, my!" "Miss Edson," he went on after a moment, "won't that be three dollars for a week?"

"Yes, just."

"This is the way I got it," went on the boy; "I said a-half Monday, and a-half Tuesday, made one dollar; and then two more days made one; and two more, one; and they all was three; was that right?"

"Yes, but couldn't you say that six halves made three whole ones?"

"No, I couldn't see so much at a time," the boy returned. "I haven't been to school much. I can't seem to see but one piece at once. Miss Edson," he resumed after a moment of silence, "do you think that would be enough to pay for ma's and Max's board here?"

"Why, perhaps so; yes."

"Because, you see," he went on, "I'd like to have ma feel independent again. She was a Dean, ma was, and there wa'n't never one of them in the poorhouse or had any help from anybody; I've heard ma say so lots of times. And then, Max, he's my boy, and I'd like him

to grow up beholden to nobody but me. And by and by, I'll get enough to support the girls, too." And this great heart, this chevalier in ragged trousers and no coat, reached over for another slice of bread; and Mame, looking further than the tousled hair respected the incipient manhood.

"I must go in and see Mrs Bly," Mame thought as she came to the upper hall, putting away the alluring temptation of her rocking-chair beside the window, a seat in it, and the story all together. "May I come in?" she asked, turning the knob after her rap.

"Yes, you may, dearie," came the answer in a faint, tremulous voice. "I'm suffering just now, but I guess I'll feel better soon."

Now there was one thing that Mame was naturally, and that was, a nurse. In five minutes she had brought warm irons from the kitchen, wrapped them up and laid them against the aching spots; in a few minutes more the white head was propped on pillows, and a cup of hot tea sent up its refreshing fragrance before her. "Why, I feel better a'ready," the old lady exclaimed; "it's partly nervous, the doctor says, and I guess I was faint and hungry a little. You see Mrs. Parsons, she tried to do for me, but the baby wa'n't feeling good, poor little creature, and she couldn't stay in. And you're

the young lady from the city, are you? Jaky told me about you; said he liked to look at you."

Mame blushed rosily; "I'm from the city, yes. I am clerk in a store."

"That's hard work, isn't it?"

"Yes, and no; sometimes it is; I like it pretty well."

"I don't see where you learned all your handy ways with the sick then," the old lady said, as Mame placed her more comfortably and cut her bread into bits just right for eating.

"Oh, I have been sick, too; in the hospital; and I watched the nurses pretty closely; I always thought it was pretty work."

"And you didn't know you was sent there to learn something good for an old woman like me, did you? No, you needn't stay any longer; I'm just as comfortable as can be, after that hot tea, and all those warm things about me. I can go to sleep now I know, right off. Yes, yes, dearie, we never know when the Lord is giving us the lessons we can do the most with. But he's allus teaching the willing spirit. You come in and see me tomorrow, won't you, dearie?"

"Yes, indeed, if I may. You make me think of my dear grandmother who died when

I was fourteen. May I call you grandmother now ? ”

And then Mame went to her room, and in the twilight seemed to hear again the voice of that saintly grandmother, whose image had always stood to her for everything good and pure that she had known.

And Ma'am Bly had one more caller before she fell asleep. That was Jaky, who came to tell her of his good fortune.

“I knew you'd have it, Jaky,” said the old lady.

“Why, how ma'am ? who told you ? ”

“Nobody ; but I asked the Lord for you. Did you, Jaky ? ”

“Why, no ma'am. But if I'd known he heard a fellow like that I would.”

“Well, he does. He does, Jaky. He says ‘Call upon me, and I will answer.’ Just you believe that, Jaky, now and forevermore ; once and for all. And I'm so glad for you, dearie. You've been dreadful kind to me and I guess he saw that too.”

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT IS JEAN ?

UP at the "big house," as Tom called it, though his wife, more democratic in her ideas, insisted that he lived at the "big house," himself,—these were busy days.

As Mark had said, when our Jean did anything she did it with her whole heart, and at present her leading idea was to have everything ready to give a charming welcome to the Van Dorms.

They were coming on Wednesday, and the simple awning at the foot of the steps leading to the piazza, must be elaborated into a long-talked-of porte-cochère; four men were set to work there. Then there was a change desired in the windows of the cupola; some colored panes in the place of plain ones; and another man was busy at that; beside the north chamber, undergoing a thorough transformation to bring it into the line of modern ideas.

"I am glad you are going to do this," Cousin Wealthy said one day, looking in. "This room always made me shiver; it was so dark and uncanny like. I would run past the door

if alone, in the evening, when a girl, I mean, of course; I am not so silly now."

"I wonder that I have left it so long," Jean made answer; "but dear papa, in spite of his good taste and his liking of modern things, yet had a soft place in his heart for this chamber."

"Perhaps it was really more an awe," Cousin Wealthy returned. "Here is where the honored guests used to be placed, and I have heard him tell many a time, how fine he felt when allowed to come up here with his mother and bring the warming-pan to put between the sheets. Children would never have thought of playing here, any more than in the meeting-house."

"Well, it is gone now," Jean said, giving a twitch to a rag of the old paper left, "how do you like the new?"

"Very fine, very fine indeed! All gilt and tinsel," said a voice at their backs.

"You here, Auntie Nye?" Jean exclaimed, turning to meet the erect and stately dame, who carried her seventy-eight years with almost the grace of a girl. "Is this desecration and vandalism in your eyes?"

"No, no, Miss Jean; Ethel told me about what you were doing, and I thought I would come over and take one more look at the old

room. I have spent many a pleasant hour here with your father's older sisters; dead and gone long ago. But this is not the first paper I remember here. That was Washington memorial paper, and represented a bier carried by four tall figures along an arch of weeping willows; and the colors were black and white."

"Cheerful subject for a sleeping-room."

"Well, my dear, I think people were not so subject to the influences about them in those days. They expected things to be, and remain, as they were. There was not the constant changing, and the fancies were not being constantly ministered to, as now. The idea of changing a paper, unless it was soiled or molded, would not have occurred to the housekeepers of that day. But the times change as well as the people, and I am not going around shaking my head and saying the old days were the best days. At any rate, not while I am bringing up my third set of children." For, to the old Nye homestead, had come first, her children, then three orphan grandchildren of whom Ethel was the youngest, and now two great grandchildren, children of Ethel's oldest sister, for her care. "Guess I shall keep young, until my youngest is in his teens, anyway," she added. "You've chosen very pretty paper,

my dear, and it will be a lovely room. Now, as my dear mother, who went away fifty years ago, used to say, 'Be sure you leave here the fragrance of some beautiful thought, that your guests finding, shall stow away among the treasures of their lives, and that shall send them out, stronger and better, for the help of others.' "

"Oh, how lovely!" and the young girl lifted moist eyes to the tranquil, elder face. "Auntie Nye, if I could only be such a woman as you are!"

"No, dear, no; far from it. Look only to the Master, and he will make your life full. Now I must go, and look in again some day to see the completed work. And, child, Ethel thinks you stand a little in awe of this grand Miss Van Dorm. Forget that. Just be yourself, and do your everyday duties. It's yourself your friends must love. Make your best self for them."

Jean remembered her words when the room was ready, and the guest soon to come. How lovely it was! "Like the most delicate of carnation pinks," she said as she stood in the doorway. Just a flush of color, and delicate tints of gold, and creamy draperies; even the satin coverings of bureau and stand painted in the most delicate pink Colorado wild flowers.

"Not a thing inharmonious," the girl said, straightening the silken "guest's comforter," "even those shades of glove silk harmonize with the rest. Now, is there anything lacking? Let's see, what was that Auntie Nye said? 'the fragrance of some beautiful thought.' That is in that Madonna, certainly, and the copy of the 'Last Supper.' But not in words. What can I give her? Ah, I think I know!" and Jean hastened to her own room.

She was skillful with the brush, and nearly always had on hand fancily decked cards of her own handiwork. Now she selected one in simple gilt borders, and rapidly filled in with illuminated letters. She had chosen some words that had taken her fancy one day.

"Their joy should be to bear his cross and shame,
Their cure, to pour for other's wounds a balm;
Their rest, to labor grandly 'In His Name.'"

She took the completed text, set it on a small, white easel, and placed it on the dressing bureau. Then, with a last glance about to decide that all merited the adjective "Perfect!" she went out.

She paused a moment at the door opposite. This room over the library was not quite as large, nor was it the carrying out of any one plan. Like most guest chambers of pleasant

homes, it was the assimilation of various graceful and hospitable thoughts, until the whole spoke of a habit of welcoming that had grown old with the family. This was Lena Van Dorm's room. Jean's own was back of this, looking off toward the lower town, and the mountains. She dropped down by the window a few moments before it should be time to meet her friends.

It had been a hard and a busy week for this girl. For, with the perversity of things, often experienced, Cousin Wealthy had been disabled; first, by neuralgia; then by an ulcerated tooth; even now her face was swathed in flannels, and Jean had had things both within and without to look after.

It is no wonder if the academy had been neglected. If baby Max had grown better, and Mrs. Bly more rheumatic, and Mame Edson used to quiet, without much assistance from Jean. "I can't do everything," she said to herself when conscience pricked a little. "Do go, Ethel, and keep that girl from being homesick," she had begged of her friend. But Ethel met with the same experience as Jean; Mame was out.

"She just lives out the doors," said Maggie, "and it's good for her, it is. I don't take away any full plate from her nowadays."

But a letter received that morning demanded attention. There had been one little work not noted, on that day that she brought Mame away from the city. The head of the large house was well known to Jean's friends and she had not hesitated to seek him and ask a favor.

"Does Miss Smith, the head of the suit department, have any vacation, sir?"

"Why, certainly; certainly, miss. All my employees have."

"Has she had that vacation this year, sir?"

"Look at the book, Vernon, and see."

"Yes, sir," was the report. "Two weeks and one day of time allowed in March, because of illness."

Jean looked disappointed. "I was about to ask leave of absence for her for a week, at least," she explained. "It seems to me that Miss Smith looks very tired and worn, and as though she might break down again."

The head of the house was a genial, pleasant gentleman; a man of business, too, and not at all oblivious to the fact that the large town of Williston, where part of his youth had been passed, furnished some of his best customers.

"I have noticed, myself, Miss Hallock, that Miss Smith looked rather used up, and in need

of rest. She is a very useful clerk, too. Leave the matter with me for a few days, and I will see what can be done, and advise you of it."

"You say that Miss Smith's sister is an invalid?" Jean had asked of Mame, on the ride home.

"Oh, yes!"

"What is the matter with her?"

"Spinal trouble."

"Can she walk?"

"Generally, a little. But Miss Smith has had a large chair arranged so that she lies back in it most of the time."

That day when Jean took Mame around to the academy, she had glanced into two rooms that communicated with one another, on the opposite side of the hall. Then she ordered Tom to see that they were cleaned, and to put down fresh matting.

The letter to-day was from Mr. Whitcomb, and said that Miss Smith could have a rest of ten days, beginning with Friday of the present week, and that he had so informed her.

"She can come on Friday afternoon then," thought Jean. "My best way will be to send Mame down Friday morning, and let her help them to get off." The note of invitation was already written, and she added this as a post-script.

And then,—though Jean thought rapidly, it was as earnest as any she had ever done in her life. “How one thing does open up to another,” she mused. “Now, I never expected to go into this thing so deeply the day I first looked over the academy. I thought I could fit up a few rooms decently, and then give it over to some society, and let them take the care and burden, while it would be a sort of amusement to myself. And here I am, pretty near a whole society myself, and seeing more and more to do. And I would not care—I would rather like it—if it was not for the Van Dorms coming. How Dolly Van Dorm would stare to see me holding the Parsons baby. She never seems to see anything common. If only Cousin Wealthy were well, I believe I would give it all to her care while they were here. Other people would,” defiantly to some voice within.

Then a long, quiet moment, while the sweet face grew more grave and earnest. Then she stretched out her hand to a little book that she had turned, face down, that morning, and read again the words she had marked then.

“This world’s no blot for us,
Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good.
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.”

Browning, who understood the battle of life, had written this for her need. It lifted her to her highest self. She must be true to that self. It showed her that what was "meat and drink" a few months since, would not satisfy now. Life must mean for her "good"; the good that the Spirit gives.

And then the question that had been waging its own fight for the week past in her heart, was settled. She must live up to her present duty; do the good that each day offered, whether those whose commendation she desired approved, or not. Nay, more, she was conscious that she had gone a step further, and if approval was withheld, it would not matter as once. There was a spirit within that was becoming a law to itself.

So the question was settled, and firmly, too. Miss Van Dorm might come now. Jean had heard her slightly sneering tones at "charity," when they had met in foreign lands, the processions of girls in uniform, and faces almost as uniform; or when in a society column she had read that, "Mrs. Fitz and Mrs. Blank were at the head of a charity ball, that was intended to eclipse all former ones."

Well, let the smile, even the suppressed scorn be met. She would give all the pleasure possible at home, to these favorites of society,

and of life ; but these others, who were God's children, although "of the least," should neither be forgotten nor neglected.

When Cousin Wealthy met her on the piazza with the joyful intelligence,—“Jean, it's broken ; now I'll be good for something,” she thought the girl's face had never looked so sweet.

“The Lord bless her,” she said, looking after the carriage. “And I guess he has ; she's lost that nervous look she's had lately. There's the makings of a dreadful grand woman in that girl, and I guess it won't be lost. Life generally brings out such. And it's astonishing how much can be got out of even a poor subject if the Lord has a hand in it. Now I'll stir around and amount to something, and thank him, too.”

CHAPTER XII.

OLD—YET NEW FRIENDS.

“THIS girl has matured into a charming woman,” was Miss Van Dorm’s thought, as she sat in her own gracious womanhood in the carriage, and listened to the chatter of the younger girls. “I always liked her, now she is something to be admired.”

“And I am so glad you could come just now,” Jean’s bright face was turned from the front seat toward her guests. “This is the ‘high tide’ of the year at Williston. Of course, I do not mean for people only. You have seen so many of those that does not matter; and I am not in it anyway, now,” with a glance at her black grenadine, “but this is Nature’s noontime; when she strikes twelve in the country.”

“I am certain you could not offer a more delightful prospect,” Miss Van Dorm said, gazing out the open sides. “And, to confess the truth, Miss Jean, I think I am tired of people; blessed be a rest from them.”

There was a note in her words Miss Van Dorm had not intended giving; but it caught

Jean's ear, and she glanced up quickly. Yes, the same note was written on the face; scarcely observable to a careless eye, but lines of unrest, of dissatisfaction. "Do you know," she added, with a smile for Jean's look, "I love the mountains more than the sea? They mean more to me. They tell of quietness; their greatness calms one's own unrest; speaks to you of strength, sufficient and satisfying. Yes, I love the mountains, and I have not tarried among them since I was in the Alps. Of course I have passed through the Rockies, and seen the snowy peaks of the west, but they are too great; they only inspire with awe."

"What a lovely street!" Lena exclaimed, as they turned into High street, and neared the Hallock home. "Do you know, Jean, I have never spent a day in New England in my life?"

"Really?"

"No; I have just raced across a corner of it down by the Sound. It is a foreign land to me."

"But with a very inviting, homey, welcoming air about it," put in the elder.

"I know. It seems as though this was where I had always belonged, and only just come to my birthright," Lena said, with a lit-

the wave of the hand peculiar to herself, while the others laughed.

“Let me give voice then to their wordless greeting, and welcome you to a home,” Jean said, springing out at her own steps. And after that there was chatter and exclaiming, that came with a very pleasant sound to the kitchen, where Cousin Wealthy and Rinda were busy, preparing those “material” trifles, that, in spite of all the suggestions of the wise as to “simplicity,” do add so much to the comfort of a guest, and have, ever since the days of old, when a host slew the fatted calf, and roasted it for his visitors.

“It’s a good thing to be young,” said Cousin Wealthy.

“Yes,” added Rinda, turning the roasting chickens and basting them, “and next best thing to being young yourself’s having young folks around you. ‘My!’” added this philosopher, “what a lonesome world this would be if everybody was born with their wisdom teeth all cut. Wonder if Miss Jean would like her puddin’ sauce best with fresh lemon, or orange seasoning?”

“Lemon, I think. I am glad Jean was brought up a thorough temperance woman. These ladies, I presume, are used to higher flavorings.”

"Have to go somewhere else than where I made puddin' sauces then," sniffed the portly cook. "I shouldn't commence puttin' a knife to my neighbor's throat when I was nigh upon fifty, I guess; when I saw enough of it in my younger days, and in my own father's house, too, to make a saint swear. And I never laid any claim to that character at any age. Dinner at six, Miss Torrey?"

"Yes, to-day; then we will go back to the usual hour. They are used to late dinners, I suppose."

"La, Miss Torrey, I don't mind. Let Miss Jean have things as suits her; I ain't so stiff I can't bend. And I made up my mind long ago, that my good looks nor my eddication wasn't such as to make me any particler ornament to society," while her fat sides shook with silent merriment. "But we need pretty things; they do us good, too. I ain't beyond saying that I'd rather look at one of those pretty vases in the parlor the judge brought from furrin parts, myself, than at this yellow bowl I'm blandin' gravy thickenin' in. Sometimes, when things are goin' wrong, the sauces stick, and the vegetables are too salt, and the cake falls, I just go in to the cool, dark parlor, when nobody's nigh, and I set down and look at one of those restful pictures, or some of the

pretty things there, till the fret and the worry all go out of me, and I come back here as quiet as Moses' kitty. I don't expect to wear fine white gowns myself; I'd look funny; but when I see Miss Jean a tripping along, all shining and smooth in one, I just say, 'There! that's a part of myself; I ironed that frock.' So, I've got a share in the world's pretty things, after all; I help make 'em; and I ain't going to dispute the Lord's way of orderin', by tellin' of him where I must be."

The trunks had come and been carried up, and the newcomers had tried every window of the three rooms with various tones of inflection in their admiring exclamations. And at last, the house was settling down to its summer afternoon quiet.

"I have a slight headache," Miss Van Dorm said, "and I will leave you young ladies, who of course never know weariness, to bring matters up to date, while I rest a while. By and by, I will come forth renewed and made over."

And she closed the door against their laughing protests and shut herself into solitude. Then she slipped into a loose robe of some silky texture, unbound her abundant hair, and drawing up an easy-chair, sat down before her satin-draped bureau. But not to use brush or

toilet appliances, not to gaze at the lovely face mirrored opposite, nor even to catch glimpses of the views from the window beyond. Almost the first thing to arrest her attention had been the "fragrant thought," cased in gilt, standing on its white easel. Now she read it over, slowly and carefully.

"Their joy should be to bear his cross and shame;
Their cure, to pour for other's wounds a balm;
Their rest to labor grandly 'In His Name.'"

"Joy; cure; rest." Strong, sweet words for any soul; for this one, who had been longing for such for so long now, they had a message.

When the world had darkened for Dolly Van Dorm years before, and her lover had been taken from her, she had followed the instructions of the venerable family pastor, and professed a religion she only half understood. But she did not realize that fact. She thought she should never care for anything again, and this would serve as an excuse for isolating herself.

But time brought its cure, though Dolly Van Dorm had never found any one to fill the place of her first love. She had many things left. Abundant means, a lovely young sister who was her heart's delight, leisure,

friends, a cultured mind. Of course these gifts made her a favorite of society, and for a while she was satisfied.

But somewhere within her, the Quaker blood that was an ancestral inheritance, began its protest. "One might as well be a slave by purchase as by choice, even if choosing society and fashion as masters," was sometimes her unspoken thought.

This had led to the restless wandering of the past few years.

This had brought at times a possible sharpness to the even tones; a shadow of care-lines to the fair forehead.

"There must be more than this in a life that God has given us," she said.

It is strange, how a person may wander in many lands as Miss Van Dorm had done; may live in the finest of hotels; meet the choicest of people, even good people; may live thus for years and never come really near to the heart of anything.

The ignorance of this highly-cultured girl, on some subjects, was astonishing. On all the latest laws of personal hygiene she was fully instructed. Could sit out an entire morning on a hotel piazza discussing theories of heredity, or of evolution. Was at home in four languages, and could trace their roots back

nearly to the Tower of Confusion. Could analyze books or their author's mind; a picture, or a poem. Could place before you all the great cathedrals, and lead you through nave or crypt.

But at the higher spiritual realm of thought she stopped short. She had acquired the continental habit of hearing few sermons. She had been as devout a worshipper as any, when some great mistress of song carried her spirit with her upon the soaring tones that seemed to reach the sky, but her own worship had been as wordless and as prayerless as the other's.

She had admired philanthropy, but had considered it a gift of possession, not one to be sought after and acquired. She had met beggars; oh, yes, scores of them; dirty little wretches; and tossed the "sou" to them in scorn. The poor were a part of the world and would be to the end.

You see that of the real meaning of her religion she knew nothing. Once, in southern California, she had happened into a Christian Endeavor meeting. The simple songs had not seemed crude to her, nor the brief, earnest prayers, foolish. Somewhere in them the earnestness, the realness, had found its way to her heart, and left there a memory that had

come back to her in many a quiet hour since. Just now they had come from a fashionable watering place, where some unpleasant occurrences had seemed to reveal the hollowness of the whole as never before.

You will understand now, why Jean's thought had a message for her guest. Why, instead of resting in sleep, she sat long studying that little card.

"Well, I understand one thing," she said at last, rising to dress for dinner, "and that is, what I have not done. I have certainly borne no cross that I could help; I have never healed a wound for another; I have never, really, done a thing 'In His Name,' purely, and sincerely. It seems there is plenty left for me to learn. Poor, ignorant, heartless thing that I am!"

But you would never have fancied that Dolly Van Dorm had been through any valley of humility, when she came down, radiant and smiling, at the dinner call.

Poor Cousin Wealthy would have liked to shrink into even a smaller corner than usual.

"Don't make me come to the table, please, Cousin Jean," she had begged. "Just look at my blistered face; swelled yet, too."

But Jean was inexorable; perhaps because the same thought had been in her own mind.

"Fie, you simply look like a blushing rose," she answered, "and I must have you there. I cannot wait at both ends of the table at once."

And, after the cordial greeting of the two guests, Cousin Wealthy was entirely at ease, and forgot all about herself in the interest of the "real talk," as she said in her own mind, that followed.

To hear these three speak, as of everyday things, of places and scenes of which she had only read, was a rare treat.

"It was quite amusing to me," Miss Van Dorm said once, "to hear what had been the ruling motive of some for desiring to come to Europe. I remember, while stopping in Berlin, that winter you were there, Miss Jean, a very genteel little lady was stopping at the same place. She was in company with some cousins, I think, but she seldom went out with them; was always in their private parlor doing silk embroidery. One day the conversation turned in that direction, and I asked her what had induced her to brave the Atlantic; for she had been expressing herself very strongly against ocean voyages. And what do you think she said? That she should never have summoned courage to come, only that she had heard what lovely embroidery pat-

terns they had in Paris, and she wanted to come and select some for herself. I asked if she was going to Rome, and she said it was too tedious a journey; she had found a teacher of some new stitches in Berlin, and she should wait there until time to return home. And she was very glad she had come, for she might never have found such a teacher in America. Think of it, girls," with a merry laugh, "to cross the sea for some embroidery patterns. And there waited the Alps, and the Rhine, and Venice and Rome! And yet," with a slight curl to the lip, "she may not differ from the rest of us. We are all, perhaps, running after shadows. As well one as another."

It was well that Cousin Wealthy was too intent upon the privileges of the tourist, to notice the sarcasm. She spoke for the first time, "When I was young, I used to say there was just one thing I wanted to see in Europe, and that was St. Peter's. The picture was in my geography, with the great dome, and I thought it the most wonderful thing in the world. You have been there, Miss Van Dorm?"

"Yes, madam, and it is a wonderful place. I have never seen anything of man's building that impressed me so much. I was there on one of the few great occasions when the Pope is

present. We waited, standing, in the front rank of thousands, for four hours, until he was brought in in his chair, carried on the shoulders of men. While waiting we saw them light up the great church. There is no instantaneous flash from electric connections, but men were swung from the dome by ropes, and in that dizzy height swung round and round, like flies caught in a cobweb, and lighted one candle at a time. But the soft glow when completed was wonderful."

"And did you hear good preaching?" asked Cousin Wealthy.

"No, madam," Dolly answered, without a smile, "none at all, as you might say. What was said was too far away, and, I presume, entirely in Latin, too."

"Then St. Peter's is really good for but little," Cousin Wealthy said. "I must put that away with the dreams of my youth."

"No, madam," Miss Van Dorm said, earnestly, "I do not think so. It is a thing of beauty, and do not you think those are educating of themselves?"

"Well, perhaps so; though it don't always go very deep, does it?"

"I do not say that it is sufficient. But there have been hours when nothing satisfied me as well as to go into some of those great cathe-

drals, and wait there in their 'dim, religious light,' until their greatness, their quiet, calmed my own restlessness and sent me out better."

"Well, well," thought Cousin Wealthy, "this fine lady and Rinda look at things pretty much alike. After all, I guess the kitchen and parlor are not so far apart in the folks God has made as some people would like to make them out to be. Only, the trouble is, to bring them together." Aloud, she said, "I suppose you have lived in other lands so long, Miss Van Dorm, that you have learned to care as much for them as your own."

But Dolly answered her with warmth: "No, Mrs. Torrey, you are mistaken there. I have been ashamed of my own country people often, when I have seen them aping the manners and customs of some of the dissipated nobility, simply because they carried a title, sadly smirched though it might be. But I think I was born too democratic in my ideas for that. I love America. I never denied that though I tried not to go about, placarded as to my dress or manners as, 'Behold! you see here a great American,' with a bright laugh. But this is the grandest land in the world. I am proud of her institutions and of her people, and of the promise she offers."

And she smiled into Mrs. Torrey's eyes with

that charming graciousness that always made friends.

And Cousin Wealthy smiled back frankly, and from that hour was one of Dolly Van Dorm's devoted admirers.

The girls sat late that evening on the lovely porch, chatting, now grave, now gay. But they had not met for years, and in such a case the threads of conversation cannot be taken up just where they were dropped. One must feel about a little to see if the friend stands just where left.

Two years can weave a filmy, but very conscious, veil between those who parted sensitive to the slightest impress from one another.

You reach out a little way with words that were once natural to both, and meet a slight check, a chill, and you draw back. Or you speak of some thought that seems to have become a part of yourself, and find the friend inattentive, indifferent.

You will never meet just where you part. Blessed is it if the coming together again is on a higher plane, though by different paths.

So these girls halted at times, and waited, to make sure where the other stood; and caught glimpses of very pleasant nooks in the characters of each that they would delight in exploring at some time.

And just within the window draperies Cousin Wealthy sat and listened.

“There’s something to each one of them,” she mused, in conclusion. “And I guess the Lord won’t forget to bring it out in time. Only I hope my little girl won’t be a coward, and afraid to show up the best part of her living; that’s always from the inside, and some way the most of us are more afraid of showing the best than the worst of that inside living. And she’s changed some since they were together afore. But I guess there’s enough of her father, if there isn’t of grace yet, to keep her true. And that’s a part of fathers, to lead us into more grace.”

CHAPTER XIII.

LENA EXPERIMENTS.

PERHAPS that had been a part of Judge Hallock's work; one of the unconscious messengers that he sent on before him, when he used to ask at family prayers, "And, Lord, make this child to become a woman patterned after thy Dorcas of old; full of good works; and strong in thy grace to carry them out."

And Jean, kneeling before the little red chair, heard, and pondered.

She rose early this morning and tarried for a little by her window. "The strength of the hills," she said, "is our Lord."

"I must arrange to leave you for a time to your own devices this morning," Jean said to her guests, after the lively breakfast time was over. "I am sorry to have anything take me from the pleasure of your society for an hour, but I have a plain call of duty."

They were on the piazza, and the girl looked off to the mountains.

"Please do not let our presence discommode your plans in the least," Dolly said, courteously.

“I have letters that must be written this morning.”

“And I shall swing myself into the embrace of yonder hammock,” Lena put in, “with my newest and most charming novel.”

Jean's grave eyes were still turned to the hills. “I may as well explain a little,” she said, and Dolly thought how lovely the girl was with the color coming into cheeks, and even spreading to neck and brow. “I have undertaken a little work these last few weeks that I feel obliged to go on with.”

“Work?” politely. It sounded strange to these hotel-bred girls.

“Yes,” with the flush deepening, “work of one kind. My father,” how the name quieted her, “among his other property, held the deed of an old school building, called an academy, where he himself attended school when young. It was his intention to convert this at some time into a,—” for the life of her she could not say “charitable institution.” She converted it into a halting sentence—“well something of help for others. He did not live to carry out any wish, and I,—I am trying to follow his idea a little.”

Of course her hearers were too well bred to stare; but Jean felt as though their eyes were piercing her, and hurried on.

"It is only a small thing, but it happens there are some new ones coming there to-day and I have to go and see to preparations for them."

"Do you mean," asked Dolly, "that you are opening a home for some people?"

"Yes, just for a little while, you know."

But Lena broke in impulsively, "No, really, Jean? Oh, you darling! But where do you find them?"

"There seems to be no trouble in finding," Jean answered. "When I began I purposed getting a few rooms ready and letting the Fresh Air Society send some of their parties. But if I go on I shall have no room for them."

"Oh, what did you get? Where did you find anybody?" from Lena.

"My first was a sick baby."

"A baby? Sick? What did you do with it?"

"Brought it and its mother, one brother and five sisters; suppose the father would have accompanied them only he had run away, to those larger and clean rooms; got a doctor and some food, and let him have a chance for life."

"And did he live?"

"Yes, and is as cunning as any baby now. May be president of these United States yet," a

little defiantly. She wished Dolly would say something.

But it was Lena who went on with the questioning. "What is his name?"

"Max."

"Aristocratic! Is he pretty? Has he curly hair?"

"Yes," again.

"Oh, I just love babies. Only, I hardly ever see one; my friends keep them in the nursery."

"This was not a nursery baby," smiling to herself.

"And who else have you?"

"A dear old lady, and a shop girl from the city."

"A shop girl! From behind the counter do you mean? How interesting! How did you chance to find her?"

Jean commenced to give the story in few words, but her own interest increased as she remembered the girl's pale face, her loneliness, and the untidy boarding-house of which she had caught a glimpse; and she did not spare herself either.

Briefly she told of her own discourteous words and her apology for them, not even looking toward Miss Van Dorm the while, and bringing in Miss Smith's story by the way.

"And it is that Miss Smith who is coming to-morrow?" Lena asked at the close. "Oh, Jean, you are a real Lady Bountiful!" but there were tears in the girl's eyes, and voice, too.

"Don't, please, Lena; I had to tell you these things to make you understand. Any one would have done at least as much as I have, after seeing."

"And you are going now to prepare for her coming?"

"Yes, with her mother and invalid sister. Mrs. Smith told Miss Edson that it was eight years since she had seen the country, and she was brought up in it. There are two connecting rooms that will be pleasant for them, I think. I shall not have to stay very long. Cousin Wealthy will be able to go this afternoon."

"Jean, please may I go with you?" asked Lena.

"Why, if you really wish it."

"I would be so delighted if you would let me. And if I am good for nothing else, perhaps I can play with the baby."

Dilly and the phaeton were already waiting, and it was only a short time before the two girls were off. As they turned away, Dolly looked after them from the pleasant piazza.

Her surroundings were, certainly, the most inviting; and she seemed a part of them, lying back in the easy, willow chair, in white morning dress, pale ribbons, and a cluster of white flowers she had found by her plate now pinned at her throat. But a not pleasant smile curved her lip, as the carriage rolled out of sight.

"I do not think, Dolly Van Dorm," she murmured, "that you were ever guilty of a greater piece of rudeness. But, actually, I could say nothing. To hear that girl tell, so simply and naturally, of a work that any one might be proud of doing. The truth is, I have never heard of such before. And she seems so bright and wonderfully winning. And she wanted some word from me. I did not know that I could lose my self-possession like that."

Dolly Van Dorm went to her own room. The beautiful valley with its quiet pictures and shifting shadows, beckoned in vain.

But she wrote no letters that morning, read nothing but the little card. That she studied, as though to extract some hidden meaning.

"I wonder if Lena has one similar," she thought, and went to see, but found nothing. Then, seeing the door of Jean's room open, she went in there.

It was a bright and sunny room, "Like the

girl, herself," she said as she stood there. And in a photograph case on a little bracket, she found another card and read,

"You must live each day at your very best;
The work of the world is done by few;
God asks that a part be done by you.

"Have a purpose, and do it with your utmost might:
You will finish your work on the other side,
When you wake in his likeness, satisfied."

It was done in small letters; she had to stoop to read.

Then she copied it on her pocket tablet and went back to her room. "I would like to be satisfied," she said after a long, long musing. "Does that follow from the other, I wonder?"

Meanwhile the two girls who had driven away were more active.

As they passed a small store,—Upper Town did not boast large shops,—Lena noticed a case of nice looking candy in the window.

"Didn't you say there were other children there than the baby?" she asked, catching Dilly's rein and pulling her nose sharply up to the shop door. At which the gentle creature turned her head to see, if possible, what new kind of a girl was riding behind her now; she thought she was used to all kinds.

"Yes. What now?" for Lena was already on the ground.

"Well, children like candy, don't they?" and the laughing face disappeared within the doorway.

She was out again with a generous package. "Two boxes," she said, displaying the choicest bonbons. "Do you think they will like those?"

"I think they are probably better acquainted with pink and white 'stick,'" Jean returned. "But perhaps they may take kindly to this luxury. Luxuries come easily to human nature."

"Well, of course I would not give away what I did not care for myself."

"Of course not; another law of human nature. Lena, you are the darling now," and as they were not passing a house just then Jean gave her friend a kiss and hug. "Lena, I am afraid your sister thinks me very silly and conceited."

"Oh, not a bit of it. But, Jean, I do not quite know what to make of Dolly lately. That calm repose of hers, that used never to waver, is lost somehow. I have never spoken of it to any one before, but I know you admire her so much, and she does not seem happy all the time. And she grows tired in a very short

time of all the gay places we visit. She seemed happier, and more like herself, after coming here last evening, than for some time."

"Perhaps she is tired out; a little rest such as Williston offers will do her good."

"Perhaps so. Is this the place, Jean?" for they had turned on to the academy grounds. "Well, I should think any one might recover from anything, with this view and air. Are those some of your protégées?" as two or three small girls sprang out from under a syringa bush and disappeared around the corner of the building.

"Yes. I presume Jaky's orders, not to show themselves in front, have been strict. But Jaky has become a man of business now, and like most men of that class, his family government must suffer. Hitherto, they have mostly 'come up' like Topsy. Now, come in to my domain, and let me give you welcome."

"I heard the trailing garments of the Night
Sweep through her marble halls:"

quoted her friend, following into the large hall where their footsteps resounded a little hollowly. "Jean, I like this in the morning and sunlight, but wouldn't it be a bit uncanny here, alone at midnight?"

"I tried it once," Jean answered, "with the

accompaniment of a thunderstorm, too. But, let me show you. If I go on much longer with this, I shall have this chapel divided, so as to make one large and several smaller rooms. The large one will be for a general assembly room for any gatherings we may want. Then, on the other side, I shall have one of those classrooms fitted up for my own 'sanctum sanctorum.' But that is all a dream of the imagination. At present, I am satisfied with humble work. Now come upstairs. I must get to work, and I will take you in to see Ma'am Bly."

The two girls went into the old lady's room and found it not quite such a haven of quiet as sometimes. Baby Max was, by no means, in his best mood. He had arrived at that stage of recovery, sometimes seen in finer nurseries, where he thought the whole world was made for his entertainment, and he was demanding it loudly. Poor Mrs. Bly was too lame to get over to the bed for him, and he was proving the increasing strength of his lungs to any chance hearer. When he saw two bright and smiling young ladies enter, he stopped a howl in the middle, and gazed at them with damp, but hopeful countenance.

"You see," explained the old lady, "we happen to be alone just now. And I never

knew him to behave so before. For shame, little Max," as the baby smiled at her from Jean's arms.

"Where is everybody?" asked Jean.

"Well, you see, Mrs. Stearns sent for Linda and said she'd give her fifty cents if she'd come and take care of her baby to-day, sos't she could do sewing with the dressmaker; and then Mrs. Parsons wanted to do some coloring, and Jaky got her some dye stuff, and she's gone at that somewheres. Somebody has give her a dress, all wool and grey, but it's faded in streaks, and she's counting on making a good green out o' it, and making the young ones some dresses; I told her I should think brown would be a safer color; but we all have to have our own tastes, of course; and Phena, she ain't quite the 'stand-by you' sort that Linda is—though Phena, she's smart enough in her way—I guess she's somewhere, but 't isn't here just now."

"Jean, let me have him awhile; then you can go to your duties," begged Lena, and as Jean was in haste, and Max never afraid of any one, the change was soon effected, and Mrs. Bly and Lena and baby left alone.

"How cunning he is!" the girl said, as Max made a dive for her shining belt-buckle, that nearly sent him headlong to the floor. Then

she thought of her candy and opening the box, put into the baby hand a large chocolate Modoc. Baby gurgled gleefully as such unexpected sweetness greeted his open mouth, and fastened his two tiny teeth firmly into the treasure.

“For the pity’s sake!” Jean exclaimed, entering just in time. “Why, he cannot have candy! He is on strict diet yet!”

But baby did not agree with her, and had another season of displeasure, from which he was only enticed by having Lena’s watch and charms for a plaything. This answered for a time, until he nearly swallowed a pearl cross, and choked himself so that his two attendants had quite a fright.

“I guess perhaps he’s hungry,” Mrs. Bly said then, in a very quavering tone. “Just turn some milk from that pitcher into a cup and give him.”

Lena did so. It was evidently what the small man was longing for, for he snatched at it so greedily, that three-fourths of the contents of the cup were precipitated into the lap of his inexperienced nurse, and the remaining quarter followed into his own face. Lena snatched her dainty handkerchief and wiped the sputtering, gasping child, who as soon as he was relieved from his milky deluge, treated

them to a series of shrieks that again brought Jean to the rescue.

Finally, quiet was restored; amid much laughter, Max took his milk, "in the proper place," as Lena said, and then evidencing a tendency toward sleepiness, he was cuddled into Lena's lap in the low rocking-chair, and the girl, whose voice was one of the sought-afters of society, softly crooned him into dreamland. How cunning he was then. His little cheek just rounding toward health; his tiny, innocent fingers. Lena wanted nothing more than just to sit and hold him.

But as the girl glanced up smiling, it struck her that the old lady, who had been so gentle through the various mishaps, leaned back wearily in her large chair, and looked very pale.

"Are you tired, Mrs. Bly?" Lena asked, gently.

"Yes, dearie, I guess I am," and the voice was faint.

"Can I do anything for you?"

"Perhaps, dearie, if the baby was laid on the bed, I guess he's all right now for a good nap, then you could give me a little milk."

Very carefully, and feeling as though she were handling fine china, Lena laid the sleeping child on the bed, and drew a long breath

when she saw that he was not roused or disturbed.

"But there is not a spoon of milk left here, Mrs. Bly," she said then, looking into the empty pitcher. "Shall I get some down-stairs?"

"Perhaps so. You see, I don't eat much breakfast; some way I am not hungry then; and Linda most always gets me something in the middle of the forenoon, and I guess I miss it, that's all."

"Let me get you something," urged Lena. "May I?"

"Well, dearie, Maggie will give you something if you will ask her."

"A cup of tea, Mrs. Bly?"

"Oh, that's too much trouble," but Lena saw the eyes brighten.

"I will bring something," the girl said, and going into the hall followed the sound of voices till she came where Jean and Mrs. McGovern were at their busiest.

"Tell Maggie to send a cup of tea, some toast and an egg," Jean said, with her hands full of towels.

Lena had been taken to the basement and shown its treasures, so now she quickly appeared in the kitchen; but it was empty. Maggie was stretching green pieces with Mrs. Parsons out in the yard.

"I think I can get up that lunch without assistance," Lena said to herself.

"How long does Mrs. Bly like to have her eggs boiled?" she asked, finding Maggie in the yard.

"Four minutes for an egg, if the water be boiling at first," was the answer.

Lena went back to the kitchen; she found a tray ready spread in the cupboard, and, without much trouble, the bread and eggs were discovered in the storeroom. There was a good fire in the range, the teakettle already boiling; everything looked favoring.

"She ought to have two eggs," Lena said, looking at the well-filled basket, "if she has had no breakfast. Now, if it takes four minutes to boil one I suppose it will take eight minutes for two," and quickly, two of the whitest and smoothest from the basket were dropped into the pipkin of bubbling water.

Then she looked about for more worlds "to conquer." That large basement kitchen was a very pleasant room, and shining in fresh paint, and every appointment bright and new, no wonder the housewifely instinct woke within her. She had never had such a chance in her life. She must improve it to the utmost. Looking about she found a toasting iron, and laid a smooth slice upon it and on the top of

the range. Now, the making of tea was not an unknown accomplishment to this child of fortune. She had seen that done scores of times, had even assisted at the ceremony. She had seen the dainty tea balls filled with the fragrant herb, then swung in the pretty cups while the steaming water was turned through. She could do that easily enough. First, the tea; then she looked about for the "ball."

Now, it chanced that Maggie had that morning, "swished" her soap holder in the hot dish-water until all the visible pieces of soap had been dissolved, but of course there was still some lingering in the inside edges; then she laid it down on the sink shelf to fill again. Whirling about in her happy excitement Lena caught sight of this; it was bright and shining; rather large she thought but then she had noticed the large, agate teapot, and supposed this matched that.

"I remember, it is a teaspoon for one cup," she said, and pressed the dry leaves into the tin holder. Then holding it in the cup slowly turned the boiling water through, and then carefully moved until the deepening color showed the strength to be extracted.

"There, that will do, I think," she said at last, and laying the soap holder back, put her lovely brown toast, and her eggs cooked "ex-

actly eight minutes," on the tray, and carried it upstairs.

Mrs. Bly smiled a welcome that went right to her heart.

"I do hope it is just right," the girl said, whirling up a stand and placing it beside her. "See, you shall have this bouquet of roses to enliven the whole. Now, isn't that cosey?"

"Yes, dearie, it is. And thank you many times. I was getting real faint."

"Well, take a little hot tea; that will cheer you. I am going to turn a little in the saucer. There, now, don't wait a minute. How is baby?" turning toward the bed.

When she looked around again the saucer, not much lowered of its contents, was on the table, and Mrs. Bly was wiping her lips and coughing, almost choking it seemed.

"Have you a cold?" the girl asked, sympathizingly. "I am so sorry. Can I get anything for you?"

"No, I guess not. I am through now," biting a bit from the toast.

That had been another subject of pondering on Lena's part. "They put salt in everything," she had said to herself, "and I should think a half-teaspoonful would be enough for one slice;" as she had carefully sprinkled that on the pretty brown crust before spreading with

butter. Now the poor subject of her care nearly had another coughing fit; but bravely subduing it remarked, "I never saw handsomer toast in my life. Maggie improves on that."

"Ah, Mrs. Bly, I made that myself," Lena exclaimed, never prouder in her life. "Maggie was out in the yard helping Mrs. Parsons, and I got up your lunch all alone; the first one in my life, in a real kitchen, I mean."

"I guess I'll have an egg now," the poor lady said, breaking the shell with a trembling hand and holding it over the glass carefully. She need not have feared; the egg rolled out, a hard, smooth ball. Ma'am Bly would have as soon eaten a cannon ball.

"How long do you like your eggs boiled?" asked Lena.

"About four minutes, dearie."

"That was what Maggie said, four minutes for one, so as there were two I let them boil just eight minutes, exactly."

"Lena," called Jean at the door just then, "is that youth asleep? Yes; well, won't you come here then and give us your advice on a question of great importance?"

"Certainly. Can you spare me a minute, Mrs. Bly?"

"Yes, dearie."

Left alone the good woman smiled rather

pathetically. "I'd never dast to eat it in the world," she said, "'twould give me a distress all night." Then she reached for the paper basket fortunately near, and wrapped the egg tightly in a piece of newspaper and pushed it to the bottom of the basket. Then she took another taste of the tea. "I can't think what happened to it," she said; "I never saw nothing like it, and I wouldn't have her feelings hurt for nothing. Poor dear!"

After a minute she spied the empty milk pitcher on the floor, and turning a generous share from her cup into it, managed to push the pitcher under a corner of the bed and draw the spread down to hide it from sight.

She had just returned to her toast when Lena opened the door. There was nothing for her but to go through it to the "bitter end," and so she did, with a courage worthy of a soldier. It was well for both that Lena had taken up Ma'am Bly's book and was reading aloud a chapter, so she was spared the wry faces that the old lady could not help making.

When the repast was finished, Lena offered to carry the tray back to the kitchen. She found Maggie standing by the sink shelf, in a state of wonderment. "Whatever has happened to me soap shaker?" she said, holding

up the shining tin thing. "It's the likes of tay it smells iv," and she held it out to Lena.

"Why it is tea," explained the girl. "I used it to make Mrs. Bly's tea; she wanted a cup; wasn't that right?"

The look of speechless consternation on the girl's face was too much; Lena burst into a merry laugh. Just then Jean appeared from the stairs with her arms full of wraps.

"Lena, I find I must go down town before going home. So I have sent one of the girls up to take care of the baby and brought your hat to you, and we will go right on. Come."

"Jean," said Lena, when they were seated in the phaeton, "let me tell you what I have done," and she told of her cup of tea.

It was hard to keep their laughter within bounds as they rode on.

"Poor woman! What a goose she must think me!" Lena exclaimed.

Half way down they met two other ladies driving, and with a message for Jean that diverted their thoughts, and the subject did not again come up until they were seated at the dinner-table.

"I suppose you made yourself useful this morning?" Dolly said then, inquiringly, to her younger sister.

"Oh, so useful!" with the laugh of a bird.

"Ask Mrs. Bly; she will recommend me for matron of a hospital. But, really, Jean, you left me with full hands in that small room," and with the most infectious glee, Lena told of her trials with Baby Max, until even her stately sister shook with laughter. "But that was not all," she went on, and began the story of Mrs. Bly's lunch. She expected a laugh over the tea, but was utterly unprepared for the merriment as she came first to the history of the eggs.

"Eight minutes for two eggs!" Cousin Wealthy exclaimed, aghast.

"Yes, madam, was not that right?"

"Lena, I do not know that I ever blushed for you before," her sister said, when the matter had been made clear.

"I only wonder what Mrs. Bly did with it; she would never eat it," Jean said.

And then had to come the soapy tea and the salted toast. Lena had never been so laughed at in her life.

But when the merriment had subsided, the girl sat very silent and thoughtful for a few moments.

"One thing is certain," she said then, lifting an earnest face, "this will not happen again; not if I can prevent it. And if Mrs. Torrey," with a smile toward that lady, "will take me

for a pupil, I will learn how to make good tea and toast, and be of some use to others. Will you teach me, Mrs. Torrey, and when?"

"To-morrow morning, bright and early," was that lady's prompt reply. "I shall be in the kitchen then. And I never knew anybody yet," she added, "at least any woman who was not a good deal happier as well as of more use, the more they knew about a kitchen, and the things that come out of it. And I'm glad when I see anybody a learning things that ought to be as plain to every woman as the nose on her face; and no mistake about that."

CHAPTER XIV.

A SIMPLE TEA-PARTY.

It was the Monday after their coming, and Jean and her guests were invited to a quiet little tea at Madam Nye's, as she was called.

Ethel had remonstrated a little: "What can we do for these fine ladies, who have been everywhere and seen everything?" she said. "Only a plain, village home."

"It is just that, my dear," the old lady shrewdly returned, "in which their education is lacking, the home life. And if they are the sensible women I fancy they are, under all that culture and fine air, then they will appreciate simple kindness, and the real things of a home life. If not, they are not the kind of friends our Jean wants, and the sooner she finds it out the better."

But not even Madam Nye half understood the new experiences of these strangers. Dolly was still quite a mystery to Jean.

"There is the place of our labors," she had said as they were out driving a day or two after the guests' coming, pointing from the

street up to the academy building near by, and hoping to hear an expression of interest.

But Dolly merely glanced at it critically with the remark, "I should think that would serve your purpose very well, Miss Jean." Then added, "What a magnificent background that solitary mountain makes for your village, with its slopes and hollows, and varying shades of green! Would it be possible to drive part way up now? the views must be very fine."

And Jean turned Dilly's head to the mountain road with a sob in her heart. This friend was failing her; she had come to a height where the other did not meet her. And, to a true heart, this is the sorest of hurts.

But Lena was engaged and happy. Each morning she presented herself in the kitchen, and worked, and blundered, and tried over, and burned herself, and laughed through it all. Monday morning she came to the breakfast-table, flushed, but triumphant, bearing in her hands a plate of crisp, hot toast, that she set down before her sister.

"See, Dolly, I have conquered. Now, when you are ill, no more burned, smoky, cold toast from some careless chambermaid, but a superfine article from your own sister's hand. Now, is not that delicious?"

And Dolly praised enough to satisfy, while Cousin Wealthy smiled indulgently on her pupil.

"Coffee next," went on Lena. "The high priestess of that department will condescend to teach your humble servant the mysteries of that art, to-morrow morning. I have had one lecture already, though Dame Rinda has little faith and less hope in any one, who 'ever wore a real stone ring,' amounting to anything. Treated me to that observation Saturday when I offered to beat the eggs for her sauce. But I told her," saucily, "that I did not know that stone rings would have any worse effect than a carnelian one with a heart on it, and I glanced at hers. And I think she has liked me rather better ever since."

Jean had met the Smiths on Friday afternoon. She had sent up Mrs. Smith and daughter and Mame Edson in a depot carriage, but had taken the invalid in her own phaeton. She had almost stared at the beautiful face when the girl was led out by her sister and helped in.

"She has the face of an angel in some of the frescoes, sister," Lena told Dolly afterward.

Lena was waiting at the rooms when Jean brought her new guests.

“As refined, ladylike people as I ever saw,” again from Lena.

And the delight and happiness of the three, when really in those rooms made ready, the others would not soon forget.

Since then Jean had learned something of their history. Mrs. Smith had been brought up in a pleasant country home and given a good education. She married a young man from the same place, who was rapidly making a place in business and went with him to the city. There, for many years he was moderately successful, and they lived in a pleasant home. Their one grief had been in the lameness of their younger daughter, left so by some child's disease. The older, Helen, was educated at a well-known seminary, and just after her graduation the father died. Then it was found that the western speculation into which he had entered in later years had proved unfavorable. Nearly everything, home and all, went to pay the debts.

Helen saw that it was necessary to do something at once. A friend of her father's offered a good clerkship in his store. She had no taste for teaching even if she had had a “pull” to secure a place. She did like business, and was soon head of her department. But expenses were many and constant, and every

cent had to go to meet the plainest living. Nearly every year she had worked through vacation time to earn extra. No wonder she had broken down the spring before.

But when Jean's invitation came she had put it by as impossible to accept.

"Such things are not for me," she thought.

Then the gentle, little mother rose to the occasion; she had begun to fear for Helen's health. Now she demanded the chance for Mabel and herself, and insisted that Helen must go to care for them. The tired clerk was almost as surprised as delighted to find herself here.

"I never saw mother so determined about anything," she had told Mame that morning, as the two were busy settling things to leave.

"I am thankful she is," answered Mame. "You look almost as thin as a shadow. And oh, isn't it lovely there! I believe, Miss Smith," shyly, "if I could stay there forever I'd grow most as good as you are," and the "forelady" appreciated what that meant.

Miss Van Dorm had to hear much of this. Lena did not notice her sister's coolness to the subject, and if Cousin Wealthy did she had ideas of her own, and Jean wondered sometimes to hear the number of questions her usually quiet cousin found to ask. Dolly Van Dorm found herself in school still.

That New England Sabbath had been a revelation to her. She had "worshipped," as she would have said, in many grand temples; had listened to many eloquent sermons; had been awed and even inspired by them. But, after all, there was a simplicity, a naturalness, about these services that appealed to her heart. A pastor from a distant city, resting here, was the preacher and his theme was charity, love to one's neighbor, and the neighbor was one in need. Then the quiet of the home, the turning from usual topics of conversation, the summer hush upon the streets, gave her more time for thought than she quite cared for.

"One realizes here that the Sabbath may mean rest, very differently from the Continental day of the same name," Miss Van Dorm said that evening, as they lingered on the piazza. "There all is bustle and confusion; the streets are crowded with pleasure-seekers; every place of amusement is thronged."

"When do they have their rest day, then?" asked Cousin Wealthy.

"They say rest is found in change and amusement, madam."

"Well, perhaps. Though as far as I have seen there isn't anybody more tired and worn out than those people who are running after amusement. I'd rather scrub and wash, than

run around for a good time to rest up on. I believe," she added, reverently, "that when the Lord said, 'Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work,' he included such work as that too, and intended the seventh to be a real rest to body and mind both. Anyway, I know that my week is a very different one if I have followed out his command."

Madam Nye came herself on Monday morning to give her invitation.

"Just a plain little home tea," she said to the guests. "Six or eight of our girl friends. I have not a table that extends for twenty, and one untrained girl can hardly prepare for, or wait upon, so many. But we like to entertain Jean's friends, and would like to give you a pleasant memory of Williston."

"It is very kind of you. We shall be most happy to accept," Miss Van Dorm answered, promptly. There was no doubt of the admiration she felt for the stately, white-haired lady; it showed in every look.

As for Lena, she exclaimed, "Oh, Mrs. Nye, I am having one of the best times of my life! Why, I shall never wish to go away from Williston."

"I want to speak with you a moment," the lady said, as Jean went with her to the door.

"Come right into the library," Jean said, and led the way.

"I have a little favor to ask of you," the lady went on. "I wish to ask one among my guests to-day that may surprise you."

"Of course you can invite whom you like, Auntie Nye," Jean returned.

Now Madam Nye knew that was perfectly true. The family purse was not long, but the honorable name was. There had been more than one governor on the list. "We haven't been in the habit of running away from our debts, nor of getting divorces," Madam Nye said sometimes.

"I want to ask Agnes Storms."

"Agnes Storms!"

"Yes. I know she is not on the usual list. But her mother was a Lothrop and used to be counted in everywhere, of course. However, I have another reason for this. I called upon Mrs. Storms the other day; her mother was one of my girlhood's dear friends. Many a pleasant hour have I spent with Agnes Lake, and I would like to lighten the daughter's burdens, if I might. I found her with plenty, though she does not mention them to you. But her health is improving, really improving at last, and for the first time in three years she is beginning to look with longing for

something beyond her own home. 'I wish I could get quite out of sight of this house,' she said once. Now, that would not be such a difficult matter. For Louis Storms, good man though he is, seems to be one of those people that always drops his bread, buttered side down. Not a bit of faculty. Now, when he put what money she had into a home, why on earth didn't he choose a different place to land it? Nobody knows. In this town of fine views he set his house down in about the only hollow, where nothing can be seen, that he could find. And then Burden built his great barn in the only lookout place there was."

"I have noticed that often," said Jean.

"'Well,' I said, 'why don't you go and see your brother?' She has one about forty miles away. But she couldn't think of that. Said she should go wild to think of herself so far away as that. By and by we got to speaking of your work at the academy; and she was so interested. I wish you would go and tell her more of it some day. She said she had heard something of it, but Agnes found so little time to get out that they really had scarcely any general news. Then she said, 'Oh, dear, I almost envy them. How lovely it would be to be in a room where one could

see something besides Burden's barn. And just think! It is three years since I have been outside our own gate.' I came away with a thought in my mind, and on the way home I met Doctor Lambeth. Strange, how the Lord almost always brings the people you need right to hand when you have a thought for him. I stopped and talked with him. Asked how it would do for her to go somewhere; and he said it would be the saving of her. Her body was coming into tone, but the spirit needed rousing; she was growing morbid. Needed to be taken out of herself into others' interests. I spoke of her brothers, and he said she was not equal to that yet. Of my house—too near. I told him what she had said of the academy, and he said nothing could be better than that. Out of sight of her own home, but not out of reach."

The old lady stopped in her rapid speech with her bright eyes upon the girl.

"I see what you want, Auntie Nye," Jean said, laughing, "do you think we could persuade her to go?"

"Will you try?"

"Most certainly."

"Having Agnes at my house to-day would be a part of it. They are proudly sensitive, of course. You might invite Kitty Storms there

as an equal, but you couldn't invite her as an inferior. Do you see?"

"Yes. Invite Agnes and I will do my best to make it pleasant for her."

"And whatever you do, Ethel will follow."

"O Auntie Nye!" and Jean leaned for a moment against the older lady, "have I so much influence? It frightens me."

"It needn't, dear. You bright, happy girls can never measure your influence. But if Christ be back of it all is well."

"Do you think—that—that Agnes has a suitable dress? How mean that sounds!"

"You don't mean it so, dear. Yes, I chanced to find out about that. Her mother told me how busy Agnes had been in making a new mull, that she has not worn yet, and showed it to me. It is pretty and tasteful. And, as any girl has a right to, Agnes will be happy in wearing it."

"What a long, private visit you have been having with that lovely old lady. I quite envy you," Lena said, as Jean returned to the piazza.

"If every one could grow old as gracefully as that," put in Miss Van Dorm, "one would not fear the advance of years."

It was just one of the pleasant little groups always coming together in these homes, that

afternoon. Taking in the invitingly laid table with its old family silver and delicate china, a few hours of chat, grave or gay, the gathering twilight, the evening music, and then a putting away among the pleasant memories.

There were only eight youthful faces, and the one with silvered hair but heart as young as any, who sat behind the quaint, silver urn, and dispensed tea or chocolate as desired. Beside Jean and her friends and Ethel, there was a friend from a near-by home and a cousin visiting her, one friend from the summer hotel, and Agnes Storms, in the fresh, pretty mull.

"I did not suppose Agnes could look so almost pretty," Ethel whispered to Jean once. "Notice her eyes; how they change from grey to dark blue, and how expressive they are."

"Yes, this urn has a history," Madam Nye said, to one of the guests, who had been admiring its graceful outline. "In the old days when Scottish history was being made on such fields as Bannockburn, one of our ancestors, who had held land for generations under one lord, received from him, at a time when his castle was in danger, several pieces of plate to secrete and care for. He did this, almost at the expense of his life, and when the lord took

away the plate he gave him this, which was an odd piece, as a reward for fidelity. Then again, in our own revolutionary days, when there were too many British and Hessians casting longing eyes upon this part of the country, it was hidden among the roots of an old oak-tree, on a farm about a mile from here, where my mother's family lived. I have heard her tell many times, how she with her brothers and sisters when they were children, used often to bury an old, cracked pitcher in the same place, and then divide into two parties, and while the British attacked, the others would defend the treasure."

"It seems to me, Madam Nye," said Miss Van Dorm, "that great things used to be nearer than they are now, that people lived closer to real things than at present. We do not seem to find great issues. Is history-making all past?"

"Only advancing, my dear Miss Van Dorm. There are giants in these days as well as then."

"Giants! dear Madam Nye!"

"Yes, to face and to fight; and the only distinction in these later days is, that women also have their part, and a most important one, in the crusades against them. Look at the temperance cause, for instance. Are we

not learning to expect that women will be in the front of that work? And is there not for them, conquests as great, history as grand to write as ever fell to the lot of any people? And there are many similar causes," she added more quietly, "enough to engage the strength of every true woman."

"But, Madam Nye," Miss Van Dorm spoke earnestly, "do you think these can exercise the same influence over one, that living right among stirring scenes, such as the revolution, did? Can we make them seem as important, as necessary, I mean? Why, it was life or death, then."

"And it is still, my dear young lady, only it is the soul as well as the body oftentimes, in these cases." Madam Nye spoke with deep feeling. There were those who said that there had been stormy times in her life in the past.

"I am glad to hear you put it in this way, Madam Nye," said the first questioner. She was the boarder from the hotel. "My home is in the city, and I grow very tired of the gay round that seems to take up all my time and to give very little in return. When I go back I shall try to find some place of work. I am going to bind myself to it, have regular hours to give to it, and see if I cannot become a

little better satisfied with myself; I am disgusted enough at times, dear knows."

"So am I," put in the guest visiting near; "but I never was until I heard of Miss Hallock's work, and what she is doing in her summer. It makes me ashamed of my uselessness."

"Don't, please," Jean said, blushing rosily. "I only did that because it was given me to do."

"Perhaps something would be given the rest of us," persisted the other, "if we kept our eyes open."

"True enough," remarked the other Hill girl.

But to Jean's relief, Madam Nye gave the signal for rising and the subject was dropped.

The Nye home was one of the older houses of the town, with a wide hall that opened quite through and out on a back porch, and from there down one or two steps, into the garden, Madam Nye's delight, full of fruit and old-fashioned flowers. In its borders one could find sweetwilliams, and love-lies-bleeding, and the fragrant clove pink, and balm for coloring, and bachelor's buttons, and hundred leaved roses. And below, were beds of thyme, and mint, and anise, and parsley, and rue, and wormwood, and sage, and tansy; "herbs good for soups or sickness," as the old lady ex-

plained; and the girls lingered curiously among them.

"No one need go to Cologne," Lena said, laughing. "Here are her twenty-seven distinct odors. I have gathered them all on my fingers," and she pinched a leaf of rosemary between them.

Then they sauntered back up the wide, central walk, and sat down, a bright, merry group, on the low porch in the gathering shadows. All but two of the number. And those two? One would never have dreamed of choosing the plain-faced, quiet Agnes Storms, whose expressive eyes had done nearly all her speaking for her, as having a message for the stately Dolly Van Dorm. The woman who had traveled everywhere, been sated with sensations until everything seemed worn out.

It chanced—let us call it so—that Miss Van Dorm had gone a few steps further than the others, to where, just on the edge of a steep incline, a seat had been placed under some lilacs, from which a grand view was given into the valley almost directly below. Not noticing how near the edge she was, her foot had almost slipped over, and she had caught quickly at a bush with a sudden exclamation. Agnes, who was last, happened to hear it, turned, and saw, and went quickly back.

"Are you hurt, Miss Van Dorm?" she asked, for that lady stood leaning against the stalk and trembling.

"More startled than hurt, Miss Storms, though I have wrenched my ankle a little."

"Let me call some one."

"No, no, please, Miss Storms. If I may lean on you a little to reach the seat, I will be all right in a few moments."

But she leaned quite heavily, and Agnes could see that she was white to the lips when she was seated.

"I am sure you need something, Miss Van Dorm," she insisted.

"No, really, Miss Storms. It is mostly the shock. For an instant I thought I was falling, and the sensation was startling." She leaned over and pressed the ankle between her fingers. "I have done that before; the ankle has a tendency to weakness. It only needs a few minutes of rest. Will you sit down here with me a few minutes?"

Would she? Simple Agnes Storms felt as though Queen Victoria had honored her. Had not her eyes unwittingly devoured this wonderful, gracious woman ever since she came in, with no thought of ever coming nearer? And now, to sit alone with her in the soft hush of this summer twilight! For this quiet

girl had the soul of a poet, a dreamer. This was a poem singing itself; a daring dream realized.

"Miss Jean tells me you have an invalid mother," Miss Van Dorm said, presently.

"She has been ill for three years, but is better now, and I hope will be well soon."

"It has been hard for you?" questioningly.

"Oh, I do not mind that. I think a person who is well ought never to mind anything," earnestly; "and I am quite well."

"Why ought not a well person to mind anything?" curiously.

"I did not mean that exactly; I meant any care or work. If one is well that can be met bravely."

"You did not mean disappointments or trials, then?"

"I do not know; I have not had any trial; my family are all living; and only one disappointment."

She spoke so naturally, that before she realized what she was saying, Dolly asked, "And what was that? Oh, I beg your pardon!" she added, quickly, "I did not think what I was saying."

But Agnes did not mind. "I wanted to be a teacher, Miss Van Dorm; I have always wanted to be. When I was a little girl I used

to think about it and dream of it. I was always playing teacher. And then," she hesitated slightly, "I hoped to do something for the others, too; I have two brothers, and the dearest little sister that ever was; and I wanted them to have chances in the world, the same as others; and mamma felt the same as I; and I had just entered the senior year of the high school, down town, and then they were planning to give me one year away, when mamma was taken sick. Of course I had to leave school; mothers are worth the most of anything, you know, and that was almost three years ago; and I was seventeen, then. Of course, even when mamma gets strong again I shall be too old to take it up."

"I do not see why," Dolly returned. This story had been more interesting than any novel she had read in a long time. "Really, I do not. Twenty is not a venerable age by any means. Have you kept up your studies?"

"I tried to read in the Chautauqua course, but I could not. I got so tired I began to grow cross and fretty, and I knew that was not right."

"Well, Miss Storms, I would not give up if I could not finish until I was twenty-five, or thirty even. I would keep on. Why I have seen students with grey hair many times."

Her manner was full of that earnest interest people often found so charming in Miss Van Dorm, when she chose to manifest it. But she was sincere this time.

"It was not all because of the children," Agnes went on, a little shyly. "Miss Van Dorm, do not you think any one ought to do all they possibly can in this world for others?"

Not very grammatical, and to this pleasure-seeker!

"I suppose so; of course," Miss Van Dorm answered.

"And to make all of themselves possible?"

"Yes."

The twilight was deepening about them; perhaps that was the reason this girl gave such unwonted confidence. In her real interest too, Dolly had leaned toward her. It was such a new thing to have any one come to her with real heart thoughts. In "society" they were not supposed to have such.

"I always wanted to do something for others," Agnes went on, simply, "to make my life worth something. And I think a teacher who wins the love and confidence of her pupils has a wonderful place. I never cared to be a missionary,—I am not good enough anyway; but perhaps I could teach, and do something

for children at least. So that was one reason also."

"Do not give it up, Miss Storms," heartily. "I am sure the world needs good teachers as much as anything."

"I have read the life of Mary Lyon," went on Agnes. "Mamma graduated at Holyoke, and certainly, it seems grand to me. Why, she was the maker of missionaries, and teachers who carried her lessons around the world. Oh, it must be grand to live like that! With such an earnest purpose! When mamma was so ill I did not mind, but now she is so much better. And then, seeing what Miss Hallock has done this summer rouses one all up. Why, if every one did as much as she has, what a happy world it would be?"

"But every one cannot, Miss Storms."

"No, of course I couldn't," humbly. "But, some way, seeing what she is doing makes one long to be more and do more. Don't you think so? Does your ankle pain you, Miss Van Dorm?" noticing a little start.

"No, I think the pain has about gone. Perhaps we had better join the others now," trying it. "Do not speak of my carelessness, please. And, Miss Storms," as they walked slowly back, "do not give up your hopes; I shall follow them with interest."

"Will you? Oh, thank you! You have helped me a great deal."

"We thought you two were lost," called Jean, as they came up the steps.

And just then, too, Madam Nye appeared in the doorway.

"Miss Van Dorm," called Ethel, "we are trying to decide the important question, of how best to retain our youthful bloom and beauty."

"Yes," put in Lena, "we have been over all the washes, and cosmetics, and powders you can think of; we have rubbed our cheeks up with coarse towels to smooth out, or frighten away, crow's nests of wrinkles; we have ironed our foreheads, and been through all the Desarte contortions to keep the lines from lips and cheeks."

"Yes," put in Jean, "if the professionals will give us but a few more rules we shall bid defiance to age; we shall have found the fountain of perpetual youth."

"Perhaps we had better ask Madam Nye for that," Miss Van Dorm said, in her brightest manner. "She certainly seems to have discovered it."

"Oh, yes, auntie," called Jean, "come and sit right down here, and tell us what you have used. It is your duty, for, see girls, there is

hardly a suggestion of wrinkle on that forehead. Do you always rub your cheeks up, Auntie Nye? and toward your eyes?" mischievously.

"Humph!" the old lady returned. "Stuff and nonsense. When I was young we went to bed in good season—generally. Didn't wear out our nerves and ruin our complexions by late hours and rich suppers. Of course we had parties, and fine ones, too, but they were only occasional. But the best thing, girls, is a quiet and contented spirit. Be contented with what God gives you, and do some work for others along the way so as to forget self, and the wrinkles will be slow in coming. Better than all the washes man ever made, I assure you."

"Wouldn't I be amused," put in Ethel, "to find grandmamma standing before the glass some day, and going through the Delsarte motions?"

"It will be a long day before you do, my dear, unless I lose my reason," returned the old lady, "which, pray God I may not. And now, young ladies, I think there must be some musical talent here that needs to be drawn out. Will you walk into the parlor and give the old lady a treat that she always enjoys?"

"Common lives?" thought Miss Van Dorm,

as the choice and artistic music fell upon the evening air, watching the serene and placid face that had looked upon more than its allotted years of life, then glancing toward the young girl who had so freely told of her heart's longings, now rapt and absorbed in the rare treat. "I begin to believe there are none such. Think of the experiences of those three-score and ten years; and of the hopes and desires of that girl. How broad they both are; how far-reaching! Dolly Van Dorm, you are beginning to see that you have missed much of life."

And when her own turn came perhaps she had never sung with so much pathos and heart before, though she chose but simple songs.

At all events there were tears in Madam Nye's eyes as she thanked her. "You have a wonderful gift in that voice, my dear lady," she said; "may many hearts be thankful and rejoice in it."

And she had never been thanked in that way before.

CHAPTER XV.

A DECISION.

THE day after the little tea-party Jean had planned to give entirely to her guests. As soon as breakfast was over, Mark appeared with Dilly and the surrey, and with many lively words the three were seated and off for a long day's drive.

"Cousin Wealthy," called Jean back, as they started, "be sure and tell Miss Smith I hope to see her to-morrow, won't you?"

"And, Mrs. Torrey," put in Lena, from the other side, "don't let kitty fall in the fire while I am gone, will you?"

Miss Van Dorm smiled indulgently on the two rattle pates, said she supposed "they couldn't help being silly on such a lovely morning," and then dropped into a fit of musing.

She was unusually quiet all the long drive of fifteen miles, to a noted college town.

They rolled along, in the leisurely manner Mark thought best for Dilly, sometimes between hills, that, wooded to their summits, caught the sunlight on their further crests, but

left the lower half still in shadow and sparkling with dew. Sometimes they wound down a long hill between swaying evergreens. "For the purpose," as Lena said, "of climbing up the other side. Such useless work, Jean, for those Titans of old, to take a good level piece of earth and make hills of it! Why not leave it smooth and plain?"

The girls were out whenever Mark thought it necessary to give Dilly a rest, and that was semi-frequently; sometimes exclaiming over some choice flower, "pretty heap of weeds," Mark pronounced them in his secret thought, with which they adorned the carriage and Dilly until the whole looked like a moving bouquet; sometimes holding a silver cup under a stray waterfall that trickled and fell over a jutting rock.

"Cool as though just from a glacier," Lena said, holding the cup toward her sister.

Then they wound along through meadows, with ribbons of brooks fringing their edges or belted across the middle.

It was almost noon when they alighted at a fine hotel in the college town for dinner.

"We will start back, Mark, as near half-past two as possible."

"Very well, Miss Jean."

It was rest time for the students of course,

but Jean had a friend in the president, whose home was here, and he, himself, gave them a delightful hour and more in taking them through the quaint old buildings, hoary and ivied, and full of associations with honored names, or showing the elegant ones of modern date.

"You have not yet even an annex for my own sex?" Miss Van Dorm said once.

"No, madam, not as yet. The day may come. The wisdom of one age becomes foolishness in the eyes of another."

"I hope not," Miss Van Dorm said, warmly. "I am not a friend to co-education as yet; but, then, I am not progressive."

"It is hard to imagine that, madam."

"What I mean is, the age advances too rapidly for me in some things. I would prefer a woman's college for my sister. I do not like to hear a woman lecture."

"Oh, don't you?" exclaimed Jean; "I have enjoyed some very much."

"It may have been my misfortune in not finding the best," Dolly returned, "but I visited one of the great international conventions in Exeter Hall, and I assure you I was not converted there."

But that was all. How charming Dolly herself was to the courtly president. How proud Jean was of her.

But she was quiet again on the home trip ; so very quiet and abstracted.

The grade was in their favor this way, and then, Dilly's head was turned homeward ; and it is astonishing how quickly a horse learns the "points of compass," with home for the magnet.

They were just in time for the warm supper, and ready for it, too, though Lena ate lightly, and then asked permission to retire, with the headache the long drive had given her.

Miss Van Dorm and Jean sat alone on the wide piazza, in the failing light, when the loud peal of the church bell broke into their silence.

"What is that for ?" asked Miss Van Dorm.

"Prayer-meeting."

"On Tuesday evening ?"

"Yes ; it is unusual, I know, but it has always been the custom here."

"Do you usually go ?"

"Sometimes. No, I am ashamed to say, since my return I have seldom been. It is so easy to get out of the habit. My father always used to attend and I went with him."

"Are they pleasant ? What are they like ?"

"Why, don't you ever go ?" queried Jean.

"Where have I been to go ?" was the answer. "I have often been into the Roman

Catholic churches and seen the worshippers come in, fall on their knees for a few moments, and go quietly out. And I was in John Knox's chapel once at a service of that kind, but they sung the old arrangement of the Psalms, and the few prayers seemed read from a book. I was in one in California that was different. But years ago, before our own home was broken up, I was not much more than a child then, my mother used to take me with her sometimes. Not to the large church where our family attended, but to a small chapel of different denomination where they had a young and enthusiastic pastor who recited a great deal of poetry, and I enjoyed that. The bright, quiet room, the smooth voice and the poetry left a pleasant impression. I believed in poetry in those days," and again Jean's ear caught the half-bitter inflection she had noticed before.

"Perhaps you would like to go?" Jean spoke, with a sudden thought, after a few moments of silence. "Would you?"

"If you like,—yes."

So they went in with others, at the last notes of the bell. The long audience-room of the church was entered from the front by only two or three steps, but the ground sloped rapidly, and the large, pleasant social rooms

under it had a side entrance quite a way back, and down a few steps. Here were the chapel and Sunday-school rooms, with a large parlor and study, all arranged with a view of being thrown, quite, or nearly into one large space.

Here, with a gentle "swish" of summer draperies, with quietly modulated words of greeting, and smiles and nods, a goodly company were coming together. Jean seated her friend toward the front on one side, and near the desk. Miss Van Dorm could look down and through the open doorways, upon a quiet and reverent audience. She had always been too well bred, and her culture was too thorough, to have ever admitted of light or sneering remarks upon things held sacred, and yet she was conscious of a little surprise.

What refined and thoughtful faces were gathering in this simple village church! of a week-day evening, too!

The pastor came in presently and took his place at the desk. He was still a young man, but close study and earnest thought had written their lines upon his face, and his whole manner was tender with reverence.

"Let us open our meeting," he said, "with the singing of the hymn,

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word."

A trained and skillful hand struck the keys of the fine piano, and a volume of sound that was full of melody rolled upon the evening air. By the third line Miss Van Dorm's musical voice had softly joined in; she could not help it.

"I shall vary the exercises of this evening," the pastor said, after Scripture reading and prayer, "and make my own part exceedingly brief. We have with us to-night, one who has stood in the front ranks of the Master's work, who, hearing the call to a foreign land, obeyed, and after ten years of service that has been richly crowned, has returned to this land for a brief and needed rest. Miss Hilda Colum, for ten years a worker in India as a missionary physician, is with us to-night, and will tell us somewhat of her work there. Let us sing,

"There is a green hill far away, without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified, who died to save us all.
We may not know, we cannot tell what pains he had to bear;
But we believe it was for us he hung and suffered there.'"

Involuntarily, Miss Van Dorm and Jean had exchanged glances. Both remembered the words of the former spoken that day, as to women speakers.

"Isn't that too bad?" thought Jean. "I

did hope Mr. Eliot would give us one of his wisest and best talks. She seemed interested, too."

It was a different strain they were singing now ; not so exultant—softer—and Dolly Van Dorm did not join in it.

"The thought I would give you to prepare you for Miss Collum's story of work," Mr. Eliot said then, "is drawn from the few words, 'Entering into that within the veil.' Our life is made larger by its hopes. In the material world, the hopes of men have led them to explore new fields, and return conquerors ; so it is in spiritual things. It is our hopes that give enlargement of life and soul. And it is the Christian's hope that enters into the veil beyond, even in this life ; and that, carrying its hope with it, enables one to endure privations, to labor in weakness and weariness, even unto death, for the sake of the glory set before it ; that leads it to see in every soul the possibility of a jewel for the Master ; it is this hope that holds them faithful to the end. Rejoicing in this hope, and in the workers whom it has inspired, let me introduce to you now, Miss Hilda Collum."

Quietly, a lady who had been sitting near the platform stepped upon it. She was not five years older than Miss Van Dorm, of fine

presence, simply but tastefully dressed. "I am glad she is so fine looking; really she has quite an 'air' about her," naughty Jean thought.

But in five minutes she had forgotten that; almost forgotten to note her companion's face. It was a plain and simple story that she told, but vivid with action, pathetic from suffering, and intensely real. When she told them of the woman, who, in all her life had never seen the sky, and who for the first time saw a star and then myriads of them, and exclaimed, "Now I believe the story of a God that you tell me. If he could make those shining balls he could care for me." Jean felt her heart sing for joy. When she heard of the poor young widow only fourteen years old, condemned to a whole life of slavish work, never to go outside of the gates, to eat alone, to be spoken to only as an outcast, and whom the hope in Christ had freed, and who to-day was studying in the junior class of a medical college in Philadelphia, and who wrote, "My life is consecrated to the work of lifting up the poor, benighted women of my own land; of breaking the shackles of prejudice and caste; of helping to bring freedom to a whole race; and so help me God." There was a stir, a rustle, a flash from eye to eye, as though that

audience longed to break its conventional bonds, and clap and applaud. Jean would not look at Miss Van Dorm's face but she chanced to glance down where the shapely, gloved hands lay in the lap, and noticed that they had lost their usual repose and were clasped tightly together.

Miss Collum used the first personal pronoun but seldom, she spoke of no hardship or burden, she made no appeal, she charged with no duty. It was a sad story faithfully told, of the hidden life of high caste women, to whom her profession had proved an open door.

But when she had finished, the silence was almost painful. No words were so fitting to break it as those Mr. Eliot chose for the final hymn,

“My faith looks up to thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Saviour divine :
Now hear me while I pray,
Take all my guilt away,
Oh, let me from this day
Be wholly thine.”

Then the benediction was pronounced and they went quietly out.

“Wasn't it just lovely ?” asked one girl behind them.

“Yes,” was the answer. “It seems wicked,

doesn't it, to think of spending my birthday money on that bracelet I have set my heart on having?"

"Yes, but then it will go such a little way. One hardly knows what to do these days."

Jean did not ask Miss Van Dorm how she had enjoyed the evening, and the latter gave no sign. They walked home quietly, and, on the plea of fatigue from the long, busy day, Miss Van Dorm excused herself at once and shut herself into her room.

And a few moments later she was reading again the little card she knew so well by heart,

"Their joy should be to bear his cross and shame :
Their cure, to pour for others' wounds a balm ;
Their rest, to labor grandly ' In His Name.'"

It was strange, the hold these words had taken upon this woman of the world. At first, only adding to her own unrest and dissatisfaction ; as the week had gone by she had read their meaning clearer. To-night when the lights were out, Dolly Van Dorm knelt long by the open window ; and when she lifted her face at last into the moonlight, there was in it a new peace and joy.

"It seems an age since I have seen that blessed Baby Max," Lena exclaimed, the next

morning as breakfast was over. "I presume he has gained a pound at least. Jean, you are going down there this morning, I do hope."

"I ought to," Jean answered, but she spoke with a slight hesitancy and an involuntary glance at the older guest.

"May I go with you, girls?" asked Dolly Van Dorm, looking up with her most engaging smile.

"O Dolly!" "Oh, will you?" from the two girls; while Mrs. Torrey marched out to the kitchen with a whole volume of expression in her smile.

"A little leaven will raise a whole batch of bread, Rinda. That's Scripture and plain English at one and the same time."

"Yes, if it's gen-oo-ine," returned the hand-maiden. "What's a raisin' now?"

"Miss Van Dorm is. Asks to go down to the academy along with the others."

"Don't say, now! Well, I've surmised there was some good metal there, when it got struck out. I was a sweepin' the piazzzy t'other day when the two started for there, and I see how she dropped her book she was pertendin' to read, and just looked and looked after 'em. 'Twas a kind o' hungry look. Oh, yes, I allus did say, and I ain't beyond sayin' it again, that rich girls don't have half a chance, most

of 'em, to amount to anything. And I suppose the Lord knows it, and 'twas one of the things he meant when he told us to 'bear with the infirmities of the weak.' I've never been tried in that way."

As for Jean, her heart was running over with joy, as she showed Miss Van Dorm over her domains, and heard the quiet, interested questions. Common sense had never been lacking in Miss Van Dorm's composition; it had been one of her charms.

They had lost Lena when they came to Baby Max. For he greeted her with a crow of delight, and put up his arms to be taken, and not even wild horses could have drawn her away after that.

So the two came alone to the chapel floor.

"This would make a very pleasant home room if fitted up," Dolly said, of the front recitation-room. "Some of the room on this floor ought to be used and save stairs."

"I know it," Jean answered, "and I mean to, if I go on. But you see, the whole idea was a sudden one."

"And you have done grandly," Miss Van Dorm said, so heartily that tears sprang into Jean's eyes. How she had longed for some appreciation from this friend—and had given up hoping for it.

"Thank you," she said, but her voice was tremulous.

They were standing by the front window. It was open, and framed in the long lawn with its trees and shaven grass, that sloped to the street. Below were the houses, the tree-fringed avenues, the steeples, the chimneys, that broke up the hillside till it reached the lowest valley; then a short rise beyond that swelled into the long, blue range of mountains.

The soft air fanned their cheeks; the distant sounds came pleasantly to their ears.

Miss Van Dorm took the girl's hand and drew it gently in her arm and held it close.

"Jean, dear," she said, "I have a little confession to make to you this morning. When I came to you I was not a happy woman. It was no fault of the circumstances of my life; they have always been smiling; but I think I was growing tired of everything, myself most of all. I was growing critical and fault-finding, beginning to call everything a sham. The truth was I had no special object in living, and nothing pleased me. A young man paid devoted attentions to Lena, and for a time I feared that her feelings might become interested, and that made me indignant. He was nothing but a society butterfly, but if he had been everything desirable I would have

been no better pleased, perhaps; though I should regret to see her throw herself away in an unhappy marriage. But just then I thought of myself. I did not care to be a hanger-on in any home. I feel the power of being more than that. I have often pictured myself as I have seen others," she went on, with a smile, "living in one hotel or another, sitting in the parlors or on the porches, fancy work in hand, discussing the latest society news or gossip, giving for charity balls to quiet an uneasy conscience, watching other people's girls come up, marry, and make homes; growing old—yes, really old—and no more life than that. Jean, do you wonder that I was growing bitter?"

But Jean only dropped a kiss lightly on the hand she was fondling.

"I have never lived much with people who were doing real work in the world," Miss Van Dorm went on, "and the few I have seen have not always worn it in pleasing guise. We were mostly chasing after pleasure, and I fancy that is a coy maiden to catch. But, Jean, dear, I have learned some new lessons."

Jean looked up; the tears were brimming over.

"I do not know why," Miss Van Dorm went on, "but when I first came it annoyed me very much to hear you speak of this work."

"I feared so," Jean answered.

"But I admired you, dear. I had not been with you half an hour when I recognized how your character had grown since I met you before, and I began to look for the cause. The verse you left on my dressing-table disturbed me from the first; I could not understand it. Your own motto was plainer but harder to believe in. I never felt so rude about anything as I have about this work I saw you so interested in, and I never behaved so rudely as in not showing any interest." But that Jean would not admit.

"I have grown worse and worse," Dolly persisted. "Everything seemed intended for me. And it seemed so strange," she admitted, frankly, "to be with people whose first thought was to do for others; who held it a duty. Why, at Madam Nye's, even that shy Miss Storms had a lesson for me; she opened her dear little heart and told me that her great desire was to have an education that she might help others. I stood convicted. And when I grew interested, and encouraged her, Jean, and she told me that I had 'helped' her, I think they were the sweetest words any one had ever said to me in my life. I began to understand where you found your happiness, and to wish for the same. And last night,

Jean, was the crown of all. Think of a woman being able to help souls," and Dolly Van Dorm's voice grew very tender, "and losing her privilege in seeking her own pleasure. I went home, dear, and promised God that my time and service and money should be henceforth used first for him. Now, will you let me begin a little with you? I have very much to learn, for I have thrown away many years."

And the two lingered long that morning by the open window, talking of many plans and hopes, and when they went out another had been born into the blessed kingdom of work.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHAT ONE OUGHT.

"I WANT to introduce you to the rest of my family now," Jean said, when their confidential talk was over, and they went out into the hall together.

It was not so quiet a house as a few weeks before. From the basement came the clatter of dishes and the voices of Maggie and Mrs. McGovern, busy at their morning duties. Tom was carrying water to the second floor; doors were opening and closing; through the open windows came the chatter of the Parsons group playing at "keeping house," out under the trees.

"Happy as so many queens, with their broken china and bits of glass," Miss Van Dorm said, as they stopped to look out. "Why, I have judged from my observations, that enough could not be done to make children happy, and then the point was not gained. They were still like the rest of the world, longing for 'more.'"

"You are being introduced to simpler con-

ditions," said Jean, laughing, "coming near to the naturalness of things."

"It must be restful," returned her friend.

They found Lena in Ma'am Bly's room, excited and busy over Baby Max. "Sister, Jean, this baby is going to have new things before this day is over,—that is, if Jean does not object."

"Do anything you wish, my dear, now and evermore, for that wonderful child," Jean returned.

"Then I shall get him a new cap and a coach, this very day, and he shall sit under the trees with the others."

"Why, he has been out there, my dear, every pleasant day."

"Yes, in a starch box," scornfully. "My laddie must go in more state than that."

"A chariot and six if you wish, dear. Mrs. Bly, this is my friend, Miss Van Dorm," Jean put in, "she is coming to help us here."

"The Lord bless you, dearie," the old lady said, gently. "Your sister has talked much and often of you. It's a blessing to have sisters; I had five."

"And all gone?" Miss Van Dorm asked, taking a seat beside her.

"All waiting beyond, dearie. We had a Christian father and mother, and were brought

up to serve God. And they all went young, twenty-three was the oldest. I was the third girl and the only one who ever married. But they have been with me, the bright, happy girls, always; and I've wondered about the 'many mansions' they've entered into, and what kind of a greeting they'll have for me; and now since I can do little but wait, they often seem very near. Yes, a true sister's the Lord's gift."

The girls were busy discussing the cap and coach, while the others had their sober chat. Then Jean led her friend away.

"I shall come again, soon, if you will let me," Miss Van Dorm said. "Jean, what a face of peace! and in poverty, too!" as they were alone in the hall.

Mrs. Parsons and family had the first two rooms in the front of the long hall; Mrs. Bly the next; then Mame Edson. On the other side, and at the further end, two rooms opened together, and were given to the Smiths. Opposite, in a room fitted up with odds and ends, Jaky slept. He was away from early morning until eight in the evening, earning his fifty cents daily.

Jean tapped at the Smith door; as they entered, a quiet picture greeted them. In a large chair sat Mrs. Smith, with quiet, pleasant face,

and hands busy in sewing. By the window, also sewing, was Miss Smith. The "forelady" was picking up in these days of rest; that showed already. On a hassock beside her was Mame Edson, book in hand. And, against the pillows of the single bed, was propped the lovely face of Jessie Smith, the invalid.

The unusual journey had proved too much for her strength, and after the excitement was over she had been obliged to lie still with aching back and head. But she greeted the callers with a bright smile.

"How are you feeling this morning?" asked Jean.

"Better, thank you. I am to be allowed to sit in the large chair this afternoon, and close to the window, too," she added, with almost childish eagerness. "I think I can pretty nearly pick leaves for myself," pointing to a mountain ash tree that almost swept the glass with its branches.

"Reading, Miss Edson?" Jean asked, after all were seated.

"Yes, no; Miss Smith says I must improve my mind while I have so much playtime," and Mame smiled up at her forelady.

"'Hygiene, Proper care of one's self,'" read Jean.

"Yes, that is what our girls mostly need,"

remarked Miss Smith, "so I persuaded Mame to read aloud to us for a while."

"I'd like a story better," the girl remarked. "But, after all," more seriously, "it is nice to know new things. I never had an idea we were made up of so many tissues and such. But you ought to see how interested Mrs. Parsons is; and such funny questions as she asks. Why, she seems most starved to know more."

Jean was looking very thoughtful. Was there another kind of hunger for her yet to meet?

"Have you been up on the hill yet, Miss Smith?" she asked, presently.

"Oh, yes, Mame has introduced me to her choice views; she couldn't be happy without."

"They ought to be there at this moment," put in the invalid. "Helen should be out of doors every moment, but she will not leave me as much as she ought. Miss Hallock, please command her to go, and mother, too. I can stay alone just as well as not."

"There, there, daughter," the mother said. "Why, it seems to me with that open window, and the fresh air that comes in all day, that I am out of doors. I have not had so much since I lived in the country. And, as for climbing stone walls and rail fences, as those girls do, why I haven't any desire to do that,"

laughing. "And when you grow strong, as you are going to do, daughter, so that you can walk downstairs, we will sit under the trees all day long if you wish."

"If we have time," the girl said, softly.

Then Jean thought quickly. Miss Smith's vacation only extended until Monday, and it was Wednesday already. No wonder the invalid was counting the days and measuring her strength. "You and your mother are not limited in your time," she said, in her most "taking" way. "I expect to keep you here as long as you can be contented. Miss Smith, wouldn't it be possible for you to content yourself with another boarding-place for a while?"

"Indeed it would," Miss Smith returned, promptly. "I should be only too happy to do so."

As for the invalid, how her eyes shone. "Do you really mean it, Miss Hallock? For us to stay here longer, mother and I?"

"Just as long as you can, Miss Jessie. Certainly until you get strong enough not only to sit, but even to walk out under the trees."

"You will, mother, won't you?" begged the sick girl.

"I shall enjoy it just as much as you will,

Jessie, and we will thank Miss Hallock in the best way that we can by growing strong. Jessie has never had such a chance before," she went on, "though the doctors have said it would be a great factor in a cure for her."

There was something very gentle and refined about this lady, for such she evidently was, however plain her dress or work-worn her hands.

"I am delighted that that matter is settled," Jean added. "I shall anticipate taking you both on some of our lovely drives when you are stronger. We are very proud of our views in Williston."

"And well they may be," commented Miss Van Dorm. And then in some way the conversation drifted to views, grand, and noted, and Jean sat quiet with the others and listened to Miss Van Dorm. Every one enjoyed listening to her. She saw everything so thoroughly, and had a way of setting it clearly before you, with little sparkles of humor or pathos.

"Oh, what a lovely journey I have had," the invalid said, drawing a long breath. "Most equal to standing there myself."

They all laughed at that. "You have given us all a great pleasure," Mrs. Smith added; her eyes had followed Miss Van Dorm with a close scrutiny; now she said, "Pardon me, but

Van Dorm is not a common name. May I ask what was your mother's name?"

"Lena Carruth," Dolly answered, promptly.

Mrs. Smith smiled brightly. "I hoped so, though I could not dare to hardly. I knew your mother, Miss Van Dorm."

"Oh, did you? Where?"

"She was at school once at Lindenwood Seminary?"

"Yes, I have heard so; I really remember very little of my mother, Mrs. Smith. I was fourteen when she died, but she was in delicate health for several years, and my father, who idolized her, constantly took her from one place to another in pursuit of health, so I saw but little of her."

"But that little must be very pleasant, Miss Van Dorm."

"Oh, she seems to me like an angel, Mrs. Smith. So sweet, and gentle, and smiling."

"She was all that, Miss Van Dorm."

"And you knew her, Mrs. Smith?"

"Yes, an aunt who had bestowed upon me the beautiful name of Hulda, atoned for it a little by leaving me a few hundred dollars when she died, and my parents said it should be used to fit me for a teacher, so I was sent for two years to Lindenwood, then quite a noted school. Your mother came at the be-

ginning of my second year, but we were together in one or two classes. I noticed her sweet face and lovely dress and admired both. She was always smiling and happy, and made me think of a rosebud in her delicate, pretty color."

"Yes, Lena has that. She is more like mamma, anyway, they say. See her now," glancing out of the window to where Lena had carried Max and deposited him in the despised starch box, and then was laughing merrily with the children while they trimmed him and his conveyance with wild flowers. "Pardon me, Mrs. Smith. Go on, please."

"We were in French together, and one day after class, going back to the classroom for something, I found your mamma sobbing as if her heart would break, by the window. I could not help it, I put my arm around her and asked if I could help her. She told her trouble sweetly, as she did everything. The professor had kept her after class; he was a pompous, fretful little man but a good instructor, and told her she must do better or he should give her 'bad mark, ze very bad mark, indeed.' I had not read as much French as she, but I had been thoroughly taught in grammar, so I could help her over many of her troubles, and that was the beginning of a

very pleasant acquaintance for me. She had such a sunny disposition, and shared all her sunshine as well as her bonbons with others. I knew that she married a Van Dorm; I heard that through another schoolmate, and then I lost trace of her. She was a girl of true Christian principle, too," and Mrs. Smith lifted her eyes quietly to the beautiful face so attentive to her.

"I wish I might be like her in that also," Miss Van Dorm said, quietly; "to me she has always been the dream of things pure and holy. I have missed my mothering, Mrs. Smith. Who can tell what I might have been with that? Will you tell me more, some time, Mrs. Smith, when my sister can hear also?" rising. "I am afraid we will tire our invalid with more now."

How prettily she had said that; "our invalid;" Jean felt like hugging her on the spot.

"As Miss Smith cannot wait long for her good times," Jean said now, "I am going to ask her to ride with me to-morrow morning; I mean to take these friends on a long drive and we will start early; will you go?"

"Let me amend that," Miss Van Dorm put in. "I am going to ask Mrs. Smith to go in my place and let me come and sit with Miss

Jessie. I will do my best to fill her place, Miss Jessie."

Mrs. Smith protested, but the invalid joined in the persuasions and so it was finally arranged.

"Jean," Miss Van Dorm said, as they came again to the room on the first floor, "an idea has struck me. I am going to ask if you will let me have this room to fit up just as I please. Then you will have a reminder of me continually, of us, I mean," for Lena had joined them. "Will you?"

And Jean yielded gracefully. Perhaps there was just a trifle of feeling in giving up any of "my own work," but if so, it was subdued. And when Lena flew around in ecstasy, measuring, planning, and making impossible suggestions, the last trace vanished and henceforth she was willing to share her "good things," also.

After dinner she drove for her friends to the furniture store and left them while she did her own errands elsewhere. Then she drove around to Mr. Shearer's. That gentleman began a little brusquely.

"Spending right and left as usual, Miss Jean, I see by the bills coming in."

"Going beyond my bank account, Mr. Shearer?"

"Hum! Oughtn't to be coming near the end. Ought to be laying up."

"So I am, sir."

"Where, pray?"

"Oh, in safe investments. Let's see, isn't it a hundredfold that's promised?"

"How much more are you purposing to do, Miss Jean?"

"I do not know, sir. My work is only day by day work as yet. I am learning some things. Have I used my income this summer?"

"Very nearly. You will have no dividends from the —— bonds this year, as they have decided to carry all to the surplus fund. That will make quite a difference."

"But I want more work done on the buildings, Mr. Shearer. The house must be repaired or there will be loss on it. Papa spoke of that at least two years ago. Will you tell me now how I stand?"

And the lawyer, having eased his conscience, spread the papers before her, and for an hour answered questions, gave advice and suggestions, all that the girl could desire.

"Sensible girl, that, after all," he confided to his spouse that night; "lots of the judge's common sense and business about her. Sight wiser than wasting on gewgaws, or throwing

it away at some swell watering place; isn't that what they call them? though I surmise there's more of other things than water at some of them."

And the "duck of a woman" merely turned so that she could see her own smile in the glass, a smile that had so much of "I knew that all the time" in it.

Jean repeated some of the results of her conversation with Mr. Shearer to Miss Van Dorm, closing—"And so I shall not enlarge more this year. Of course, I hope this is not the end of the academy work, by any means. I have fully resolved now to carry out papa's intention and form a permanent home of some kind there, and all the things I have gathered will come into use. But just now I must take time and counsel to decide. Now we will try to build up the ailing ones we have there; I am beginning to see that even a little, done day by day for him, may be the best of work. I want only one more; that is Mrs. Storms. How can we manage to get her?"

That was a matter Madam Nye did not let them forget, but for which no one had any answer at present. It came to them at last.

They were gathered, Jean, the two Miss Van Dorms and Ethel, on Saturday morning, in the room Miss Van Dorm had asked to be permit-

ted to fit up. They had met to "dedicate it," Ethel said; to plan for a little entertainment they were to give on Monday evening in the old chapel. So many of Jean's friends had begged, "Do let us help you, Jean. We want to do something," that this was to be the outcome.

Besides, was there ever a time when girls did not like to get together and "get up" something.

They had exhausted their exclamations over the pretty room, that was only now open to "the public" for the first time; said "public" consisting of Jean and Ethel.

For the two days previous the Misses Van Dorm had had a taste of entirely new pleasures. On Thursday the paperhangers had come, and covered the walls and ceiling with plain paper of a delicate fawn tint, set off by a handsome border of trailing vines and flowers. Then the next day came the man from the furniture store, and the two girls worked with him, and behind closed doors. They could not even take time to go up to dinner, but feasted on Maggie's good bread, baked potatoes and codfish cooked in cream.

"I don't think anything ever tasted half as good in all my life as that dinner," Lena confided to Jean.

At which Jean laughed, "Hunger is a good

sauce, my dear," and went on her way smiling. "How perfectly lovely" these friends were, anyway.

"I am going to have a carpet, Jean," Miss Van Dorm had said, "because it will wear much longer than matting, I presume; but I will promise not to be extravagant in that line. Indeed, I shall indulge in but one extravagance. That you must permit to me;" and for that there had been some correspondence not yet submitted to the "public."

Now the floor was covered with a carpet of the same soft tone as the walls, on which graceful vines and delicate flowers were scattered. The windows had shades to match, and white muslin curtains were looped back from these. There were several cane rockers, two or three upholstered easy-chairs, a wide couch that could be transformed into a bed; a small, but solid table held a large reading lamp; a plain, oak writing desk stood open in one corner, and above that a bracket lamp; smaller chairs and hassocks were scattered about; a square mirror hung over a mantel, on which was draped a pretty lambrequin and on which stood two or three vases and ornaments and a small clock; and an order to the florist had brought a half dozen flowering plants that gave quite a home air to the whole.

"Perfect!" Jean had exclaimed, when her eyes had taken it all in. "Oh, you darlings!"

"A very symphony in color!" Ethel had followed. "Expression fails me."

"Cease to labor with words then," advised Miss Van Dorm, "and come to the real business of the meeting."

"Max Levison is coming back to-night," said Ethel, perched on the head of the couch, "and he will be perfect for the character of John Alden. That pensive, scholarly head of his will bear the style well."

"And Herbert Liscomb will sustain the doughty Miles Standish with equal effect," put in Jean.

And so on for some time the girls arranged for tableaux, charade, or song.

"I see that I shall have to confess my little mystery," Dolly said, when the question of accompaniment was being discussed. "I told you, Jean, that I would be guilty of but one extravagance. It is this; I have ordered an upright piano, and a letter this morning says it is purchased and will probably reach Williston this evening."

She got no further with her sentence; the three girls fell upon her like amiable wolves and devoured her with kisses and caresses.

"That crowns everything," Jean said, when

order was restored. "Now my happiness is complete."

"Now we will get Mabel to sing 'The Brook,' she renders that just lovely; and Fannie will give two of her comic songs, and, Miss Van Dorm—" turning toward her with beseeching in her eyes.

"Anything you wish," was the gracious answer.

"Then our program will be complete," from Jean.

"And everybody get the worth of their money," from Ethel, at which all laughed.

"Only," Jean went on, "who will read the poem? I declare, fine readers are scarcer than good musicians."

"Lena could do it, but she is Priscilla and could not well take both."

It was Miss Van Dorm who finally broke into the discussion with a remark that brought entire silence for a moment.

"I will tell you," she said, "who is a natural and very effective reader."

"Who?"

"Miss Edson. That morning that I spent with Miss Jessie, while you were gone to ride, I went quietly down the hall and came to their door without being heard. Miss Edson was reading aloud; the door was open, and I

waited listening until she finished, for she was almost through. She was reading Lowell's 'Sir Launfal,' and I never heard it given better. Why, the girl's soul seemed to be speaking. How she would do before an audience, of course I could not say; but if as well as that, she would charm the house."

"Let us ask her," said Jean.

"Of course," from the other two.

"You and Lena go and see her then, Ethel," remarked Jean, "and I will write notes to the girls. A rehearsal this evening, shall it be?"

"Yes."

"Except for the music," from Miss Van Dorm. "The piano will not be placed here before Monday, I presume."

"Well, we are not asking anything new in that, so it does not matter. Only, Miss Smith must go by early train Tuesday morning and we want to give her this pleasure first."

"How that little woman has improved," remarked Ethel, "and she is as nice as she can be, anyway."

"Jean," Miss Van Dorm said, when the two were left, "how would it do to invite Mrs. Storms here to spend a day after the entertainment? We will give her this room, and then, perhaps, we can prevail on her to pass

the night; the couch is fitted for that, you know."

"Yes, and Maggie sleeps in that small room right back of the stairs, and Maggie used to live with her and thought everything of her. We will try; it's a splendid idea."

The girls came back successful. "Miss Edson will do it; Lena read it over with her, and now she has taken the book and gone out to the woods to practice."

"And how glad Miss Smith was for the thought," added Lena. "She came down the hall with us and said that would do Mame more good than a score of her lectures, and a bushel of advice. To let her have a place for once, among nice things, and a responsible part in it, was worth so much more than looking on from beyond the foot-lights; and she said Mame was crazy for 'good times.' Well, I suppose we should be, too, only we have them all the time without any chance to long for them," Lena added, thoughtfully.

"That is true enough," commented Jean, "and it reminds me, cannot we find something for Agnes Storms to do?"

"Why, she is just what we want for the 'Hanging of the Crane;' with her solemn, grey eyes, as though she were looking with a prophet's ken into the future. And she used

to be a good reader or reciter, too, don't you remember, Ethel?"

"She is now," from Ethel. "She is the best reader in the Endeavor meetings; they always give her the longest passages."

"And she will not require dress for that part," went on Jean. "Only to be draped in black, and not much of the face to show. I am so glad we thought of her."

"May we be the messengers again?" asked Lena.

"Yes, Dilly is at the door. Take her and hurry back," and again the two were left alone together.

"Jean, dear," Miss Van Dorm broke the silence that only the swift gliding of a pen had interrupted, "I am recognizing a fact, that if all entertainments were gotten up in the spirit with which you girls are arranging this, there would not be quite so much bitterness and uncomfortableness at the end, as there often is. It's the following out of the higher law, is it not?"

But Jean only answered, "Why, it is only what we ought to do, I suppose."

CHAPTER XVII.

STILL MORE.

YOU will not be surprised to learn that the impromptu "An evening with the poets, and song," as it was ambitiously announced, proved a grand success.

People in Williston, like the rest of the world, were made up of good, bad, and indifferent. They usually rose up in the morning filled with their own plans and wishes for the day; but if any one was brave enough, and full enough of it, to set before them work that was unselfish and had a thought for others in it, they could be quickly and heartily interested. This work of Jean's had been more talked of than she would have imagined. It had roused unaccustomed feelings; there was more than curiosity in the large company that gathered.

"It seems to me," old Mrs. Stayput had said when she first heard of it, "that young people in these days take a great deal upon themselves. The idea that we have never taken proper measures to care for our poor, until these young chits get together, and pick out certain ones, as they fancy, to pamper and

spoil them, so as to make them discontented for the rest of their lives with the station in which it has pleased providence to place them. I do not approve of it."

"Let me see," remarked her daughter-in-law, pricking her embroidery and speech at the same time, "haven't I heard you say, that you and that old Mrs. Bly went to the district school together when you were children?"

"Well, what if we did?"

"And they say," the younger went on, "that she is growing better every week. Dr. Lambeth says her troubles are largely neuralgic, and the rest from that noisy brood of children and the overworking she is always doing is effecting wonders for her."

"Humph!" was the only return to this information.

"And it does seem to me," Mrs. Shearer was confiding to a friend about that same time, "as if the girls of these days, some of them, I mean, were making such use of their opportunities as puts us older ones entirely to shame. Look at that blessed Jean Hallock, for instance."

"But she has plenty of money," was the answer.

"Well, isn't the temptation to give that and her time, too, to foolishness, all the greater?"

Instead of that she's giving a good deal more than money; she's doing her best for others; and she's led that grand Miss Van Dorm into the same way, till she's 'most as interested as Jean herself."

But Mrs. Stayput was in a front seat of the old chapel when the evening came, and, perhaps it was memories hovering about the place, but certainly, her world-worn face seemed softened, and the daughter-in-law beside her had lost a few of the habitual wrinkles about lip and eye.

"It seems good to come in again at the old door, Lyman," Judge Marsh remarked, settling his portly form on one of the narrow seats. "I remember when I didn't fill this desk quite as well as now, eh."

"That was when you were learning to conjugate 'Amo,' with your eyes across the aisle," returned the minister addressed.

"Bless me! Couldn't go through a Latin verb now to save my head," and the judge laughed. "Seems to me we spend most of our lives in learning things to forget," he added.

Soon the seats were crowded, the aisles were filled, the hall beyond was packed. The movable platform was rolled across one corner near the entrance, and Maggie's room behind the stairs served as waiting-room, while a

curtain across that end of the hall made a passage to the rear recitation-room used as a robing room.

It was, as said, an "evening with the poets," in which charades or tableaux set forth the text. First, came the "Songs of Seven," in which, from the smiling child to the silvering head of mature life, the parts were well sustained and recited. Then a brilliant piano solo from Lena Van Dorm. Longfellow's exquisite "Hanging of the Crane," next elicited much praise; the scene, an old-fashioned fireplace, (made by the carpenter from wood) in which was hung the iron crane holding a new, shining copper kettle. Beside it, but half-hidden, stood the seeress, who read in clear, melodious tone —

"The lights are out, and gone are all the guests
That thronging came with merriment and jests
To celebrate the hanging of the crane
In the new house—into the night are gone;
But still the fire upon the hearth burns on,
And I alone remain."

The next scene showed a small table at which two were seated alone; love was in their eyes—happiness on their brows, and partly concealed by a screen the seeress mused aloud —

"For two alone, there in the hall
Is spread the table round and small;"—

Scene third, Baby Max had been added to the table group, and sat in his high chair —

“A little angel unaware,

.

Drums on the table with his spoon,”—

Only, in his wonder at his first introduction to social life, Max failed entirely to drum, but with spoon uplifted, stared with round-eyed wonder, and still delicate face, at the unusual sights.

But it was a wonderful occasion to his admiring family seated in a row on the front corner seats reserved for the academy family, and when his little part was over, no less than seven pairs of arms were outstretched for him. It was to Jaky's that his own were reached.

“Who was that seeress?” was the question, when the last scene of this poem was over. “The part was certainly well read.”

“That was Agnes Storms,” Madam Nye responded, in a by no means inaudible tone. “Granddaughter of my old friend, Agnes Lake. And I remember, you do, too, do you not, Judge Marsh, what a fine reader we all thought Agnes Lake? Her granddaughter seems to have inherited her talent.”

Madam Nye could say what she pleased in Williston. People had rather forgotten Agnes

Storms of late; she had been so confined at home, and the income of the merchant's clerk was so small.

But the most highly applauded renderings of the evening were the "Courtship of Miles Standish," and the singing of Miss Van Dorm. A carefully selected arrangement of the courtship had been chosen, and Mame Edson seemed to forget audience and self, and read as though the scene were before her, with a naturalness far beyond "elocution," that was refreshing. And Lena as a simple Puritan maiden was charming. Truth compels us to admit, that Max Levison, with his sunny, boyish face, and fair hair, who personated the messenger, John Alden, played the part of a wooer with striking effect.

Miss Van Dorm had never sung for "charity effects" before, she had looked at them askance, and gave quite a little thought to her selections; though one would never have dreamed that; they were so simple. The first, an Alpine song, with the mountain girl's clear calls that we fear no native-born mountaineer could have attained; then for the two encores, simple ballads of love and home, that left the audience quiet, and with thoughtful pictures in their hearts.

"Most seemed, when Miss Van Dorm was

singing to-night," Rinda confided to her spouse, when they were alone, "as though our courtin' days was back again. Those was days when I used to think how I'd just make you the best wife any man ever had had. No scoldin's, nor jawin's, nor anything of that sort, and the buttons sewed on faithful; though nobody can say but I've done that last, thanks be," and the buxom dame stabbed a single hairpin into her pug for its night arrangement, while her voice shook suspiciously.

But Mark laid a brown and toil-worn hand on the trembling shoulder. "It hain't ever seemed to me, Rinda, as though those days was over," he said; and being a quiet man that meant much, and his wife knew it.

A night or two after, when the two were left in full possession of the house, Rinda surreptitiously carried a volume of Longfellow's poems from the library shelves to her swept and dusted kitchen, and while she was busy in repairing men's wear, Mark read through, and with evident enjoyment, the "Hanging of the Crane."

"Well," was the good woman's comment at the close, "there's folks and folks in this world. Why some of us are made to feel pretty things inside and couldn't say a word about 'em to save our heads, I don't see; and

others'll trip 'em off as easy as I whisk up whites o' eggs for frosting; and there they be, just what they ought to. It passes me, that I do say, but it's dreadful nice anyway."

"When do you return to foreign parts, Max?" Madam Nye had asked of young Levison, as the crowd were leaving the hall that night.

"Not at all, madam. When a fellow has only one mother, and that a pretty frail little one, and she sets such store by her only boy, it gives a different look to things. I've concluded there's plenty to learn on this side the water, so here I stay and try to make a good American citizen."

"Couldn't do a better thing with yourself," returned the lady, "and I am glad to hear your decision."

"O Miss Van Dorm!" had exclaimed a gushing lady whose plumes waved the highest, and whose voice was of the loudest, "I do hope you are not going to leave Williston soon, I really do."

"No," was the quiet reply, "we have taken board at the hotel, and shall remain for some time."

"Oh, I am delighted to hear it; I am indeed. It will be a great acquisition. How delightful!"

And Mrs. Storms had come the next day

after the entertainment. It was almost beyond her hope when Jean went to give the invitation, and probably it would not have been successful had it not been for the "counting in" of Agnes.

For these people belonged to that super-sensitive class whose feelings must always be taken into account.

Not a small number by any means, but here circumstances had fostered the growth.

But the invitation was very tempting. The trip was just far enough not to alarm her. Old associations and pleasant memories tugged at her heart strings. It would be pleasant to be in the old places again.

Still, it was a very pale and trembling invalid that Jean found when she came on Tuesday morning with Dilly and the phaeton.

"The most gentle horse in the world," Jean said, as Dilly ventured to prick up her ears and look at something, and Mrs. Storms turned nervously.

They drove slowly; it was still early of a beautiful morning, and the fresh air fulfilled its mission of unconscious cheer. When they drove up to Madam Nye's side door a faint flush had come to the pale cheek, and she smiled brightly at her mother's friend.

"Now you are going to gain right along," said the elder lady. "One has to be quite a way up before they can really use the means for full recovery. When they get where they can do that health is pretty well assured. Only, my dear, just rest and enjoy yourself. Leave your worries. God is in his heaven still. Remember that."

They stayed and talked for quite a while; they made one or two more calls at doors, and the warm greetings and rejoicings did the long time "shut-in" good.

"How kind everybody is," she said, with more animation than she had spoken for a long time.

When they reached the academy door she walked up the steps quite actively.

"It is just as lovely here as ever," she said, turning to take in the view. "Oh, what good times I have had here," turning to the hall. "And this old recitation-room!" as they entered the pretty parlor. "It does not look much as it used when it had only a row of benches around the sides, and I came in trembling with algebra in hand. Oh, I do wish Agnes could have the chance I had then."

Miss Van Dorm came in and gave her best greeting. Then, after she had looked about a little, they prevailed on her to lie on the couch

and Maggie brought her a cup of coffee and dainty slices of bread and butter.

“Why, Maggie, this seems like old times,” the invalid said. “Why, if everybody is so good to me, I shall not wish to leave you at all.”

But they did not tell her of all their plan at once. They left that until late afternoon, and to Madam Nye. Mrs. Storms had insisted on going down to dinner, and had found in Mrs. Smith some one who knew a cousin of her own, and the two had enjoyed a pleasant visit after.

“I hope you will stay with us quite a while,” Mrs. Smith said as she left the room.

“Oh, no, I am only going to spend the day,” was the reply.

No one knew what arguments Madam Nye used to prevail upon her to make a longer tarry. She was persuaded at last. “Everybody is so kind,” she said again.

But when the long day filled with its small excitements was over, then the delicate frame and active nerves revenged themselves. Mrs. Smith had made her a long call, she had read a little, Maggie came in to help her to bed. Then the large house grew quiet; the children's voices ceased in the halls; the moon looked in on her. For awhile the invalid lay

quiet too; the pleasant scenes of the day flitted before her active brain; she was stronger, oh, so much stronger; soon, she could assume care again; Agnes should study, she was not too old yet; Lottie should have every advantage. She was almost slipping away to dream-land; something roused her; her eyes were wide open; the town clock tolled out the strokes of eleven; she was shivering as if in an ague fit. Why had not she gone home when night came? Oh, if she was only in her own bed, with the bell on the stand beside her; everybody was so far away; she must not waken Maggie, tired out after the busy day; what strange shadows the trees made.

She was not shivering now, but in a wash of perspiration; the clock was striking twelve; would it never be morning? She tried to go over the old school-days; like phantoms they disturbed her unquiet brain. What a long hour until the single stroke of one sounded. She would never, never, go away alone again. But was she alone? What had Madam Nye said? "God is in his heaven." She took the thought and clung to it. He was sufficient.

When the hour of two sounded there was a quiet sleeper at last on the low couch, and the work of healing was again going on.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LETTER AND A SYMPHONY.

It was two or three mornings later that Dolly Van Dorm came into the dining-room of the academy and stood for a moment by its open window. It was a pleasant view that she looked upon; the same rolling slope to the lower town with scattered streets and houses; the same blue mountains in the distance, with which Williston dwellers were so familiar.

But a scene nearer at hand occupied her thought now. The large trees stood on the slope a little distance from the building, but quite close to it and near the dining-room, was a bunch of lilac bushes that afforded a shady retreat for almost the entire home party. Here, in two rocking-chairs, sat the two invalids, Mrs. Storms and Jessie Smith; for Jessie's hopes were realized, she could get downstairs now, and spent almost the entire time out of doors. It was better times with Ma'am Bly' too, as with the aid of a crutch and Mame Edson's young arm she had been able to hobble out, and sat now, her peaceful face leaning against the high backed chair, the

picture of rest. On the bench sat Mrs. Smith with ever busy fingers, and Mrs. Parsons equally intent on sewing for the little ones.

No one there had improved more than this same poor woman. Rest from intense care and overwork, and good wholesome food, had effected wonders, and developed that pride and tidiness that had once belonged to Mark's "Dean girl." She was fashioning over a garment for one of the little girls, and under Mrs. Smith's directing guidance there could be no slighting.

On a shawl spread on the ground Mame Edson had placed herself with a book, and Baby Max who was manifesting an inclination to use his small limbs to some purpose, had frequently to be picked up from his pursuit after stones and straws, and put back again on his carpet.

"Jean's summer work has been to some purpose," mused the onlooker by the window, nodding with smiling "Good-morning," to the group. "These are not the same pale, discouraged persons they were even when I first came. If they had had nothing more than these few weeks of rest and pleasure, how that has brightened life for them. The 'day by day duty' is a great duty after all, and has blessed reward."

Then Miss Van Dorm closed the outside green shutters, turned the slats to soften the sunlight, and sat down. She had come this morning to write a promised letter for Maggie to her mother left in "ould Ireland." It was astonishing, the things Dolly found to do in these "new days." She had been in the kitchen and taken notes of the desired messages, and came in here to write because it was cooler, and at the same time near to her dictator.

She was trying to construct some form of letters that should agree with the sounds from Maggie's lips when she gave her the name of the town in the old country where her mother resided, when she heard some new voices, and glancing between the slats, saw Agnes Storms, with little Lottie bright and freshly curled, coming to join the outdoor party.

"Why, my dears, how did you get here so early?" asked Mrs. Storms, between the rapturous hugs and kisses the child showered upon her.

"Oh, we got up very, very early, didn't we, Lottie? and Lottie has helped me all the morning, mamma; wiped the dishes, every one almost, she did; and dry, too."

"And never break-ed one," put in the child, stopping to run after Max.

"Where are the Parsons girls, mamma? I promised Lottie she might play with them a little while, and she brought her doll, you see, to-day;" for Lottie had come the day before with empty arms.

"They are on the other side of the house, I think," her mother answered.

"May Max go too?" pleaded the little girl.

"Oh, yes, do let him," from Mame, "he's livelier than a centipede this morning."

So the two children went around the corner together.

"How did you rest last night, mamma?" asked Agnes.

"Nicely, dear; couldn't have done better. Only waked once all night, and that rested me. I have slept well since the first night."

The writer beyond the window was busy; the name was finally spelled after a fashion, and Miss Van Dorm went on —

"DEAR MOTHER:

"I am well when this leaves the lady's hand and hope it will find you the same."

"Let me say when this leaves my hand, not 'the lady's,'" Miss Van Dorm had suggested, but Maggie objected.

"Is it chaiting I'd be, and make the poor

old lady think I'd got the accomplishment of writing since I came to Ameriky? No; tell her it's the rale lady's sindin' it; she'd think a hape more of it."

It did not take long to write all; the instructions had not been many.

"Is it a book I'd be after sindin' her?" returned the girl when asked for more. "Faith, she'd be wonderin' whose time I was after takin', and if there was nothin' better to do here than to flourish a stick of a pen." But she did not mean to be uncomplimentary.

One message she gave two or three times over. "Tell Micky there's byes here in plinty, but they didn't come from the county Limerick, and that is the county for the fine byes."

Then Dolly added a sentence of her own. "The lady wants to tell Maggie's mother, that there is not a better or more faithful girl in America than her own Maggie," and the brief epistle was finished.

In and out there had come to the writer's half comprehension the words of those outside. Now, as she sat waiting for Maggie to return from her upstairs duties, the words of the speakers shaped themselves to her ear.

"I was a teacher for three years," Mrs. Smith was saying, "and they are very delightful years in memory. All in one place,

and only a district school, but district schools then were more than now, as there were only private schools besides, and those were expensive. I had pupils, both boys and girls, older than myself, and formed some pleasant friendships among them. There was one boy, seemingly not the brightest, and the circumstances of his life were all against him, but I became interested in him because of his spirit of hard work. Why, there was no 'let go' to him. I remember his coming in one morning as excited as could be; he had worked until four o'clock over one example."

"Did he get it?" eagerly from Agnes.

"Of course he did; I made up my mind then that there was something to that boy and I must help him, and I often stayed with him until dark after that. One night, it was snowing, and we had worked on arithmetic almost as long as we could see, and someway, we drifted into a little personal talk, and I asked him what he was going to be.

"He said he did not know; as far as he could see there was not much in life worth living for anyway.

"That shocked me out of my reserve, and before I knew it I was speaking to him of God and the Bible. I never could talk about those things wisely as some can, but he lis-

tened quietly, said he had never given that much study. I asked him if he would do so, and after some hesitation, he said he would take time, some time.

“The next morning I was busy at my desk and it was just time to call the children, when I saw a hand lay a soiled bit of paper before me. I opened it and read, ‘I believe in the Bible, and promise to live by it as well as I know how, from this time and forever.—JOHN.’

“It was night before I could see him alone. ‘Yes,’ he said then, ‘I read it all night, last night, and I made up my mind.’”

“And what became of him?” asked Mame, after a long moment of silence.

“Oh, yes, that was what I commenced to say. He has been pastor over a city church for years. There are four hundred or more members. He works just as hard there as ever. Yes, teaching pays wonderfully.”

“But all do not turn out so well, Mrs. Smith,” from Agnes.

“Oh, no indeed; there are discouragements, but I know you would enjoy it.”

“Well, I know what I would like to be,” put in Mame Edson.

“What?”

“A nurse.”

"Oh my!"

"You'd make a good one, dearie," from Ma'am Bly. "You're dretful handy round a sick room."

"That is so," added Jessie Smith, with a bright smile. "Why, if I was covered with feathers Mame wouldn't ruffle one, she's so gentle and soft like. But it must be very hard work."

"I don't care if it is," persisted Mame, "I like it. I never thought till I came here anything about it. Some way, it seemed as though folks came to be what they were just as it happened, same as those weeds in the fields over yonder come up where they chance to, and have to live their life out right there. I wasn't particularly fond of selling goods over a counter; why, I don't mean to find fault with it; it's good enough, and I'd got to make my bread and butter, poor enough that last is usually too where I board, but there wasn't anything satisfying in it, I mean. I never thought as work could be that till I came here and saw some things that I have. Why, Miss Hallock seems to enjoy working around here, and the Miss Van Dorms, too, and I know they are not obliged to do it. They could laze around same as other rich girls in fine dresses if they wanted to; I used to think that would

be the height of happiness ; but I believe now, if I only knew how to be a good nurse, that I'd rather work than not ; that I'd like to be of some use in the world. But, of course, I cannot," with a little sigh.

"What would you like to be, Mrs. Parsons?" Mrs. Smith asked, in her soft, gentle way.

But Mrs. Parsons shook her head,—“I couldn't ever be anything in the world,” she said. “I'd be satisfied if I had a little bit of a home, I'd get on with four rooms easy, where I could keep the children together and decent ; and then, if we had a new stove that didn't smoke and had a reservoir on to hold hot water, and could have good butcher's meat once or twice a week, and a little garden around the house, and a few hens, it's all I'd ask ; I don't know anything more satisfyin' than to go out and find a nest o' eggs you wasn't expectin' to, or to see little fluffy chickens a trottin' around with their mas. They know most as much as folks, hens and chickens do ; see the little things when they're tired or hungry, how they'll stand right in front of her and look up in her face and tell her about it, same's mine do me. And when they go to bed at night, and the old hen sits with a little head peepin' out between every inch or two of

feathers, and a singin', actually singin' themselves to sleep. Oh, they're cute!

"It's what we used to plan for, and a cistern, and all, when we was keepin' company; but some way—some way—he's kind o' dropped out."

There was true pathos in that closing tone that told of volumes of disappointment, and Ma'am Bly spoke up cheerily,

"Well, dearie, perhaps the Lord'll let you see all that yet."

"Yes," Mrs. Parsons returned, brightening up, "Jaky says I shall; and Jaky's a good boy. He don't seem rushing nor drove ever, Jaky don't, but some way he gets there. And he paid Miss Hallock three dollars last Saturday, to go as far as 'twould toward board. It's all he gets a week, but that's 'better than a slap in the face,' as my father used to say. And Miss Hallock said, says she, 'Jaky, I'll take it every other week, and the other turn you must keep it, to get shoes and things.' So Jaky was satisfied."

It was true; Jean had not dared discourage the independent spirit of the boy.

"Well, I used to have my aims and ambitions, a good many of them, too," remarked Mrs. Smith. "But when I lost my husband and home, and Jessie her health, I found they

had been pretty narrow ones, and I had to look up something better. I found it one day when I was reading; it was called a 'Symphony of Life.' "

"What's that?" asked Mrs. Bly.

"I've seen that word on the play bills," put in Mame.

"Yes, it means a 'harmony of sounds.' Here it meant a harmony of living. I liked it so well that I learned it, and it has helped me many times since."

"Oh, tell it to us, please!" begged Agnes.

Mrs. Smith complied, and repeated —

"To live content with small means ;

To seek elegance rather than luxury,

Refinement rather than fashion ;

To be worthy, not simply respectable ;

And wealthy, not simply rich ;

To study hard, think quietly,

Talk gently, act frankly ;

To listen with open heart to birds and stars,

To babes and sages ;

To bear all cheerfully, do all bravely ;

Await occasions, never hurry —

In a word to let the spiritual life

Grow up through and above the common —

This to be my symphony of life."

"I like that about the birds and stars," said Mrs. Parsons.

"It's good to be worthy as well as respectable," from Ma'am Bly. "We're all right if it's only on the inside. There won't be any mistake about us then."

Agnes was taking the words down while the others talked. "I never expect to be rich," was her thought. "I must make my best of what I am."

Miss Van Dorm had heard with no qualm of conscience. They knew she was there if they had forgotten. Now, at Maggie's step on the stairway she rose and went to the kitchen to meet her.

"I have heard some wise words spoken on great hotel piazzas," she said to her friend Jean, later, "but I learned this morning that all the wisdom does not go with fine gowns, or the thought with those who have leisure for study. And I picked a little heart's-desire, too, that I mean to transform into a heart's-ease. We must give that bright Mame Edson her longing, and make a nurse of her. Only, how many such opportunities I must have let pass by in that gay life of mine."

CHAPTER XIX.

LITTLE MUFF.

THE hotel at Williston was not one of the modern, new-style, balloon constructions. Its beginning was lost in the early days of the town, when stage coaches running between the far north and the cities near the sea, stopped here for "refreshment for man and beast."

What an important hour of the day that was, when the four sleek steeds, panting from their long climb up the steepest hill to be found in that vicinity, were drawn up with a grand flourish of reins and crack of whip, before the entrance door; how mine host hastened out with smiling face to welcome the stiff and weary travelers; what a crowd of loungers were always waiting, with open mouth, to hear the latest news; perhaps of Washington and his troops, or the old Continental Congress perchance, seeking to bring peace and unity from many discordant elements.

Those days were forgotten now; the town on the hill was set back by the busier one at the foot; "transients" were no longer enter-

tained; the original house had settled into a dignified repose; had added deep, two-storied balconies; then another long building across a narrow street, and connected the second stories by a covered corridor mostly of glass that blossomed in plants and flowers; then flanked itself with long wings, and threw out two or three square windows, and framed itself in a setting of velvety lawn that made a charming scene of the whole. Yet, large as it was, in the summer time it was always overrun with guests, and many of the neighbors, with houses larger than their means, took lodgers into their pleasant rooms, as an easy way provided by Providence to eke out the latter.

This had been the case when the Misses Van Dorm decided to tarry for some time longer in Williston; they found a home room in a large corner chamber of Miss Kip's colonial mansion, second house from the hotel; their meals they would take in the hotel dining-room. And to this room their trunks had been transported from Jean's early on Friday morning.

An hour or two later, it was the same morning that Miss Van Dorm was writing for Maggie, Jean called with Dilly and the phaeton to take Lena to ride.

"It does not seem right at all to have you

anywhere but in my own house, so long as you are in Williston," Jean said, as Lena tucked her pretty cotton frock away from the dust.

"No, and I feel lost and forlorn yet. But then, it is one of the longest visits that I ever knew Dolly to make in her life. She has a great fear, so long as she cannot return the hospitality in kind, of trespassing upon others' kindness."

"Lena, do you suppose Dolly ever could like any one well enough again to marry?"

"I do not know, I am sure. She never seems to think anything about that for herself, though she has often told me that she hoped I would find some one and make a home of my own. But, dear me, I trust that is far in the distance. I have good times now, and I never saw any one yet I would leave Dolly for."

They had taken a long road around to Lower Town. It went quite out of one village and came back into the other in a sharp angle; the houses were scattered here and they met few vehicles.

"I like this road," Jean said. "It seemed so strange, but I had a friend visiting me one summer; she was from the city and one would think that she would have enjoyed getting out

where there was a little nature. But, dear me, no; whenever we went to drive she would rather go up and down our busiest streets than to get out where there was the least bit of country. I brought her out this way once, and she wanted to know what I chose such a wilderness drive as this for. It always seems to me, Lena, that something is lacking in one that can see no beauty in nature."

"I know; as though the paltry works of men could equal what God has done. And yet, how little we really know ourselves of its wonders. I often think that if we gave one half the time to studying the things about us that we do to our fashion plates, how much wiser we would be."

"And more quiet and restful," returned Jean.

They had crossed over a short hill and were nearing the turn when a curve in the winding road brought them upon what seemed some trouble. A sleepy looking horse and a grocery cart were drawn up at the side, and on the grass, a boy was kneeling, evidently at work over something.

Jean stopped as near as she could to the group. "What is the trouble, little boy?" she asked.

The boy lifted his head. To their surprise

they saw a tear-stained face, and it was Jaky's.

"Why, Jaky Parsons!" both exclaimed.

"O Miss Hallock," cried out the boy, more quickly than they had ever heard Jaky speak before, "see here, this is my kitty!" and he thrust before their astonished eyes the most bedraggled and forlorn specimen of the genus feline one could imagine.

"What do you mean, Jaky?" and Jean involuntarily drew back from the dripping animal. "Where did you get that?"

"It's mine, Miss Hallock. Anyway it was, when we lived up to the little house on the mountain. When we come away I gave it to Mrs. Carr; but it wouldn't stay, she told me so, and she didn't know where it went. And it loved me, it did," and the boy's tears flowed afresh.

"How did it come here?"

"I s'pose it's been looking for me, miss, and when I came along here just now I saw two boys, I know 'em, mean old town things! a plaguing this cat; they was throwin' it out into that there pond," pointing to where the small brook had filled to its edges a circular little basin, "and when it would get out they'd throw it in again. I told 'em to let up on that but they just laughed; then I see

'twas my Muff, and she knew me, too, she yowled right out, and I went for 'em with my whip, and that madded 'em, and they threw her up in the air, and she came down on a stone and broke her leg; and just then they saw your carriage coming, and was afraid and run away."

Jaky's tongue was unloosed for once in its life.

"Oh, she isn't drowned then," as the boy turned his forlorn treasure round for inspection, and elicited a most mournful howl.

"No'm, but she might's well be if her leg's broke," with another sob.

But by this Lena was out and seated on the grass, the carriage mat on her lap. Jean was in the phaeton still. A little way back Dilly had been roused by the near report of some sportsman's gun, and, gentle as was the creature, there was too much spirit in her to be trusted on the open highway without some proper reminder of bit or rein.

"Now, let me have her, Jaky," and poor kitty was tenderly laid on the soft lamb's wool mat. She really seemed too thin to utter such a sharp "Meow!" as again greeted their ears.

"Most starved, poor little thing!" and Lena's handkerchief was busily rubbing the moisture

from the soft maltese coat while Jean's was passed down for a drying towel. "Can't its leg be mended?"

"Don't s'pose so, no'm. 'Twouldn't keep nothin' tied on to hold it stiff."

Lena gently lifted the white-tipped forepaw. "Why, it's its arm," she said. "It would be real pretty, Jean, if its bones were not quite so much in evidence; do you think they could ever get well covered?" for by this time Dilly's nose was fast to a fence post and her mistress had joined the others. "What can we do for it? Don't you believe if I tied up the arm it would grow together?" holding up the member that drooped limply from the kneejoint. Even Lena would not have called it an elbow joint.

"I don't know."

"Well, I will try it," tearing her dainty handkerchief in two, while Jaky's tears were dried on his dusty face at such a prospect of help, and kitty looked at them with large mournful eyes as though questioning why so much trouble must come to her, and uttering now and again plaintive murmurs, half meows and half sighs. "Now, Jaky, you hold her still and I will try."

Jaky was preparing to undertake this difficult feat, when a voice close beside them

startled them all. "What is the matter here, ladies? Can I be of any assistance to you?" was the question, in a full tenor tone.

"O Max!" "O Mr. Levison!" were the two exclamations and answers.

"See this poor kitty, Max," from Jean.

"She's broken her arm," from Lena. "What can we do for her?"

"Right in my professional line," from the newcomer. "Perhaps I may be permitted in such an exigency to operate, even without the saving 'M. D.'"

"Do mend it if you can, Max."

"I believe she understands everything we say; see her look at you with those beseeching glances," remarked Lena. "She would be a beauty if she was only dry and clean. See what lovely fur she has."

Something just then, perhaps it was a glance at the wet and muddy animal, caused the unfledged physician to turn aside and cough two or three times gently. Then he turned back to business.

"Here, boy, you had better hold this patient. Is it your cat?"

"Yes, sir."

"Lay her down on the mat. Steady, now. Here, puss, let's see what is the matter. Why, it's dislocated, that's all."

"What's that, sir?"

"Out of joint. Now then, hold her still. Don't let her bite either of us."

"I'll hold her head," Lena said, quickly, and wound her fragment of handkerchief around kitty's neck and held it tight.

"Good!" said the young man, "that will keep her mouth in place."

He lifted the paw gently, felt softly all over it, then there was a quick motion, a snap, one frantic yowl and twist from the poor subject, and it was over.

"There, that is all right, I guess," the operator remarked, with professional pride beaming all over his face, "it was a clean slip."

Jaky was still holding on with a grip that nearly brought the hollow sides together, but Lena had loosened her bandage and was softly stroking the furry head, while kitty herself, again in possession of her paw, was licking and biting the injured joint.

"Is she all right now, sir?" Jaky asked.

"Yes, you had better keep her as quiet as you can for a few days. Tell the mice to keep out of hearing; and I would advise unlimited doses of lacteal fluid and a few grains of cereals, or the like."

The boy gazed at him with open countenance.

"He means bread and milk, Jaky," remarked Jean. "What a quiz you always were, Max! I will see to that, Jaky."

"Will you, miss? Cos, I must be goin'; I don't know what the boss will say, but I'll tell him how 'twas, and he can dock my pay, you know. 'Twon't matter this week, Miss Hallock; this is my week; I haven't got to have shoes yet, you know. These ain't very bad."

"We will take Muff home with us, Jaky, and feed her. I think she will stay. You will find her there to-night."

And the boy, with a cluck to his sleepy horse, was off.

"One of your protégés, Jean?" These two had gone back to the old habit of names during the summer's intercourse.

"Yes; a good boy, too; making of a president in him. How did you come to be here, Max?"

"Out botanizing," and the young man pointed to his tin case he had thrown from his shoulders. But his eyes strayed often to Jean's friend, who still sat on the grass, mat in lap, and the late patient reposing on it.

Kitty had ceased her attentions to herself and lay now quiet, occasionally lifting her eyes to the hand that was softly stroking her head, as though with thanks.

"See, Jean, she is beginning to purr. Hear that!" and Lena bent her ear attentively.

"It is only the hollow roaring from the vacuum inside that you hear," remarked Max!

"Poor kitty! she is hungry—but grateful."

"Well, Lena, if we have to get this small animal home we may as well turn about and go," Jean remarked.

So Mr. Levison promptly led Dilly up and assisted the young ladies into the carriage, Lena refusing to part with her patient for an instant, lest it should be frightened and get away.

But Muff manifested no such intention. She evidently knew a good thing, and was satisfied that even a carriage ride was better than fleeing from dogs and boys, being shaken out of breath, drowned in mud holes, and thrown on stones. So she lay quiet under Lena's firm hand, and the two went back up the hill they had recently come down.

As for the young man, he stood a moment looking after them; then strapped on his case again.

"Well, kitty, I am really quite obliged to you," he mused, as he turned away. "Didn't she make a pretty picture, though? sitting there with a face so full of pity and kindness!" But he did not mean the kitty this time.

That night when Jaky came home he was escorted by a joyful procession to the kitchen, where he found Muff reposing in a basket lined with soft rags. She was evidently suited with her new quarters, and lifted her soft grey eyes trustfully to the group, then yawned, and stretched and purred.

"What you got on her leg?" asked the boy, noting the bit of soft muslin about the joint.

"Miss Lena did that," explained Phena. "Ma'am Bly told her to. It's a piece of her handkerchief, too. Muff didn't mind. She told her to sew it on tight, and then steep some wormwood and turn some on every little while. Ma'am said 'twould cure faster. And she eats some of it off. But Miss Lena said, no matter. And you ought to see her eat once. Tom says we'll have to have a cow now."

"She's goin' to sleep in my room," the boy said, lifting the basket.

"Sure, and I hope so," the patient Maggie remarked. "It's likin' to see her eat and get fat I am, and there's mice enough in the wall to put the flish on her bones, but it's sparin' her from under my feet I can be and no tears shed."

So Jaky gathered her to his own warm heart that night with complete joy; and as the days went by Muff grew and thrived, and would

have waxed fat exceedingly, had it not been for the amount of attention shown her by Baby Max, who thought nothing quite so fine as to bury his tiny hands in her soft fur—to the Max of larger growth, who found in the slight lameness that followed her injury sufficient excuse for consulting with the young lady who had manifested so much interest in his “first case”; consultations that grew so interesting and lengthy, it really seemed that the original subject must have been entirely exhausted.

CHAPTER XX.

A SONG IN PROSE.

THE days of that busy summer had all passed by, and the early autumn weeks had followed on, and still Jean's family at the academy had not greatly changed.

Ma'am Bly's grandchildren had been sick with the measles, and one, a little girl of ten, had been left weak and miserable and with a bad cough.

"It would do Ida good, I do believe," the old lady said to her stepson when he called to see her, as he did every Sunday afternoon, "to come here and stay with me awhile. She ain't so strong as the others any time, and they kind of crowd on her without meaning to. Don't you suppose Mandy would let her come? She could sleep with me, she always lies still as a mouse anyway; and I know Miss Hallock would be glad to have her."

"Perhaps so," the son answered. "Mandy thinks a sight of her children, as you know."

"Yes, I know that. Poor thing, I wish she could have more time to look after 'em, and kind of enjoy 'em. And she will when I get

back; I'm so much stronger, and gaining all the time; I'll be able to take her mendin' and sewin' right off her hands."

"It's good to see you so much better, mother. And I'll be real glad to see you back," the man answered, heartily; "and so'll Mandy, too, I know she will, though she don't say much; Mandy's better on the inside than she seems sometimes," apologetically.

"Yes, yes, William, I know. She's had to work hard all her life, went into the mill when she was only ten, and it isn't everybody as can keep a smiling with their lips when their feet and backs are always tired out and aching."

"But I've got work promised for all winter this time," the man went on, "and I hope things won't be so bad as last."

"That's something to thank the Lord for," the old lady returned, devoutly.

And quiet little Ida came, and still remained.

Mrs. Storms had spent two weeks in the bright, pretty room; weeks that sent her home wonderfully improved, and, above all and best of all, her thoughts had been taken from herself and could now be interested in others, and that is a long step forward for nervous sufferers.

Miss Smith had come out each Saturday night, returning to the city by early train Monday, finding each time Jessie improving and happy as the day was long. It was she too, who had found two more girls, one a clerk, the other a cash girl, worn out from the long, heated summer in the city, and who were given two weeks of rest and upbuilding in the academy home.

Mame Edson was still there. Hers had been, after all, the slowest recovery. A low fever lingered in her veins, and not until the more bracing airs of fall did she really begin to feel "like herself."

It had been a delightful autumn. Not even the equinoctial storm had disturbed its calm greatly. That had the grace to reserve most of its wildness for the nighttime. Day after day the sun had risen in a clear sky, or, if clouds occasionally drifted before it, it was only that the glory of the shadows might be seen, as they chased one another along the mountain-side. Here and there along the hill-sides had been set among the dark green, now a twig, again a branch or even a full tree, of flaming or golden color; the alders that fringed the brooks were sobering to russet hues; the scattered hemlock shrubs were a vivid yellow.

Sometimes a low sound among the trees, of

whistling wind, was like a moan of the beautiful summer loath to pass by.

These days too had brought a change to Mrs. Parsons. For a long time, the rest, the freedom from care, the delight of seeing Baby Max grow strong and well, had seemed to bring peace and quiet to her worn face.

But lately a new restlessness possessed her. She took long absences frequently, late in the day usually, always alone, and seemingly was anxious to avoid notice when she started.

"Where you goin' to, ma?" It was Phena as usual who turned up in the unexpected places.

Mrs. Parsons was hastening down to the side street that ran below the academy grounds, when these words brought her to a standstill.

She turned about quickly. "You go 'long back to the house and behave yourself," she said, sharply.

"Well, where be you goin'?"

"Goin' to find some work," the mother answered, more quietly. "Don't you know this house'll be closed up for cold weather pretty soon, and then where'll we be?"

"Oh, Miss Hallock'll take care of us."

"Guess she won't, forever."

"Well, Jaky then."

"Jaky'll do as well as he knows how."

"Well, what you goin' off that way fur? that's a good ways round."

"Never mind; I've got an errand. You go back now and behave yourself, and I'll find a penny for you somewhere, see if I don't."

Reluctantly, Phena turned back—as far as the screening lilacs; there she hid herself and watched the retreating figure, walking with unusual swiftness along the narrow side street, until it entered a small grocery kept on the outskirts of the town by an enterprising German.

Then she waited a little to see her mother come out, but the lively sounds coming from the playground were too much for the small spy, and she gave up her pursuit after knowledge, and ran to join in the game.

Had she been patient a little longer her zeal would have been rewarded. Mrs. Parsons did emerge from the grocery door, a good-sized package in her hand, and after a quick glance in every direction, instead of turning down toward the village, followed this side street as it wound off around the base of the mountain out to the open country. Only for a short distance, however, before she came to the mountain road, and after another quick glance about, she turned into this. The ascent was not steep



“You were hungry, Abel, dreadful hungry, wasn’t you?”

here; there were long, rolling pitches between short levels, the road ran between stone walls fringed with trees, and there were pastures and meadows beyond.

In a few moments the woman had reached the thicker line of woods, that swept almost unbrokenly to the mountain-top. Here she turned into the undergrowth, and, not a quarter of a mile beyond, came to a small sugar house half in ruins.

The spot was not far from the place where Mame Edson had met her "tramp," weeks before. A tramp was here now; the identical one, with a military coat and a grey patch on the elbow.

Mrs. Parsons did not seem surprised. "I've come again, Abel," she said, "and brought you something more to eat; but it's the last time; let me tell you that."

The woman's face was hard and stern, every work-line in it was visible; the man hardly looked at it. He snatched the brown paper package and tore it open. There was a loaf of bread, and some herring. He broke off chunks and devoured them greedily.

The woman looking on, softened.

"You were hungry, Abel, dreadful hungry, wasn't you?"

"I'm most starved, Phileny; I haven't

touched to help myself to a thing the whole week just as I promised, and I heard the hens cackling like everything in Hemingway's barn and knew there was eggs there. But I told you I wouldn't, and I didn't. I got two breakfasts for splitting wood, and that's all 'sides what you left me."

The woman made no answer. She had seated herself wearily after her long walk, on a log. It was near the edge of the wood. She could look down over the fields where the shadows were long; there was a glimpse of one corner of the academy; the sun was shining on that still.

"How is the little fellow?" the man asked at last, half timidly.

"Oh, he is cute, awful cute," was the answer.

The man seemed to swallow something.

"He was too heavy for you to bring along, I s'pose?" next.

"Yes," then with a sudden turn—"What'd I bring him along with me fur? I'm goin' to raise him up to be a good man, if he's got it in him; and how much would it help him to bring him here? How much did you ever help with any of 'em, Abel Parsons?"

"I know; I know, Phileny;" the man cowered as though struck; "I haven't been good for much myself, and it's dreadful hard when

a fellow gets slidin' down hill, to turn about and go t'other way. He has to crawl pretty slow. And then, when nobody cares, or wants him!"

The woman's face twitched; she looked hard at that corner of the academy wall. Only the upper part in sunlight now.

"Jaky's a good boy," she said at last.

"What a pretty little fellow he was," the man said, venturing to take a seat on the log, at a respectful distance; "do you remember the first time he walked alone? We stood him up by the window, and then you sat one side the room and I t'other, and we both held out our hands to him."

"And he ran straight to you," interrupted the woman, "and you scolded him, and told him he ought to have gone to his ma first."

"Of course; so he had."

"That was when we lived in the Miles place," the woman spoke again, quickly; "what a pleasant little house that was; with the sun shining in at 'most every window, and a garden, and currant bushes. And you set out two apple-trees too, don't you remember, Abel?"

"Yes; I thought then I was goin' to buy it some day; but I never did," sadly.

"And I thought I couldn't scrub and clean it enough," the woman put in. "I used to

polish the windows, and stove, and make things shine, and I s'posed then I should always keep house just so. But I didn't, Abel."

Again there was silence. A squirrel ran up a tree near with his mouth full, and stopped to look at the intruders before he whisked his bushy tail into the hollow tree belonging to him. The shadows were settling over the academy corner now.

"The Miles place is empty now, Phileny," the man said, at last.

"Is it, Abel?"

"Yes. I went by t'other day. It's for sale, Jim told me."

"I wonder if it's got a cistern?" said the woman, after a time.

"Could have one, easy," was the answer; "right in the southeast corner of the cellar, you know."

"Abel," and the woman turned to him with a determination he had never seen in her face before, "I want my boys, and girls too, to turn out Christian folks. That was the trouble with us. I've been this summer along with such, and I've seen the difference. I want 'em to go to church and Sunday-school, and keep clean, and not swear or drink; and I mean they shall, too."

"I hain't no objection, Phileny; I'd help

all I knew how. And you know I didn't drink."

"And they've got to work, too; earn their bread honest like other folks."

"Mr. Sampson says he'll give me a steady job in his shop, Phileny."

"Will you take it, Abel?" and the woman turned and looked at him steadily.

"Yes, I will, Phileny."

"And stick to it? God helping you?"

A new light flashed in that moment into the man's face. It was like the kindling of a soul's purpose.

"Yes, I will. If he'll help, Phileny. You see," the man went on, "I've done a considerable thinkin' while I've been knocking about this summer, and I've made up my mind tain't the thing for a man with a wife and family to be doin'." That new light was in the man's face as though long-slumbering hope had been roused, his stooping shoulders seemed to straighten, there was a decided ring to his voice. "I guess I could buy the Miles place yet if I set out," he added, "and as for the cistern, I could make that myself; I can handle a trowel 'most as good as a mason."

Mr. Parsons had been a carpenter, and called a "handy" one too.

"And if I had plenty of water I could keep

things shinin'; and they're good children, Abel, real good." The woman seemed to have dropped ten years from her age since she came up the hill.

The sun had quite gone now behind the hills, the aftermath on the rolling slopes lay dark, shadows were lost in the falling twilight.

The woman rose, glanced once more at that academy corner, fading from sight now, and turned toward the road,—

"Come on, then, Abel," she said, "we'll try goin' up hill and down together once more;" and the man followed her.

* * * * *

It was about a dozen days later, that Jean and Ethel rode down through the town, beyond the mills, and turned to the outskirts in pursuit of the Miles cottage.

They found the small house, set up from the road, with a stony garden and bare row of currant bushes, but still looking pleasant in the afternoon sunlight.

There were lilac bushes each side the door and three or four apple-trees scattered about.

Dilly was fastened, and the door was opened before they reached it, and Mrs. Parsons, smiling and bright, with Max in her arms, wel-

comed them. The baby was snatched away and hugged and kissed.

"I do miss him beyond anything, Mrs. Parsons," Jean said.

"So do I," from Ethel. "And Miss Lena told me to give him twenty kisses for her, and this hood," and a small parcel was opened and duly admired.

When the exclamations were over the girls looked about. The square kitchen had windows on the south and west and was sunny, and clean as hands could make it. Near the centre stood the longed-for "new stove with reservoir," Jean's gift, and Mrs. Parsons' great delight; every damper and arrangement had now to be gone over and explained, and the girls were just about as interested as though "setting up housekeeping" for themselves.

"And, miss," the woman said, "he came home Saturday night with his wage of nine dollars, and after supper he went down and bought a barrel of flour and a ton of coal and a bit of meat for the Sunday dinner; and we've got apples on two trees, and I made a pie, and you never see folks so tickled over anything. Jaky had been to church and Sunday-school, and so had Linda and Hattie, Phena hadn't any good shoes, and after dinner, Abel, he read the papers they'd brought

home and some in a book; he's a good reader, Abel is, and before we went to bed he read the lesson for next Sunday out of a paper, and we all knelt down and said the Lord's prayer just as we used to with Mrs. Smith at the old academy. And it seemed dreadful good, miss, it did," and Mrs. Parsons' were not the only eyes that filled with tears for a moment.

"Are you studying fruit catalogues, Mrs. Parsons?" Jean asked, seeing one open on a table.

"Jaky is. His pa and I sed he could have one dollar of his own wage and he's goin' to have one of those monstrous apples, and some others, and a pear and two grapes. And he's goin' to night school three evenings a week. And Jaky's set on what he's goin' to be, too."

"What?" eagerly.

"A builder; of factories and churches, and such. And I've got one wash a week. Abel says I can't do any more; that's Mrs. Sampson's, and I'll get a dollar and a half, and get Phena shoes first and then things so I can go to church, too."

The girls made a long call, and as they drove away Ethel said, gravely, "Jean, I always think of Mrs. Matson's reception after a talk with Mrs. Parsons."

"What do you mean, Ethel?"

"Don't you remember we found her the night of that reception? And Jean, Mrs. Matson had wine that night, and when I think of the way her only son drank champagne, I wonder if the day may not come when Jaky, the builder, who says he will never drink a drop of liquor in his life, may not stand higher in the world than that dissipated favorite of fortune."

"Stranger things than that have happened," Jean said.

And then as the road curved they turned to take another look at the little cottage, again a home. The sun shone on it, Mrs. Parsons and the little lad were watching from the door, the girls waved a smiling "good-bye." And we too, turning away with them, take our farewell. Some day when good work is wanted we may find them again.

And as they rode away Jean recited softly,

"Hast thou, my Master, aught for me to do
To honor thee to-day?
Hast thou a word of love to some poor soul
That I may say?
For see this world that thou hast made so fair
Within its heart is sad;
Thousands are lonely, thousands weep and sigh,
But few are glad."

CHAPTER XXI.

STILL LOOKING FORWARD.

"THROUGH upstairs, are you, Maggie?"

"Yes, Miss Hallock. It's only shining up the sink below, and putting a polish on the stove, and giving a sweeping to the kitchen and pantry, and a few such I have. I'll be through by dinner time."

"Very well; leave the key with Thomas, he will be here through the day, and Mr. Atkins will send two men this afternoon to move the piano."

"The fire went out in the furnace yesterday," said Maggie.

"I will tell Thomas to see that everything is safe and closed tightly." And then Jean followed up the stairs and down the halls that sounded hollow to her resounding step, to where the sound of girls' voices came to her ear.

She found them in the "Smith" rooms.

"Like ghosts of days departed," quoted Lena to her as she entered.

"O Jean, I am so sorry the summer is over and gone," was Ethel's greeting. "Can't we begin it over again?"

Dolly Van Dorm looked up from her rocking-chair with a smile and "Good-morning." The four had met by appointment this morning in the deserted academy, for the "final services," as Ethel phrased it. "We are certain of keeping our 'good thing' now," she said. "Memory will hold it for us. If we were only looking forward it might fail us."

"That is so. Now, Miss Van Dorm, tell us all about how the Smiths are situated. We have been waiting for you, Jean. What detained you?"

"Mr. Shearer and his bills," smiling.

"Are you bankrupt in purse, Jean?"

"Oh no, and rich in almost the first compliment Mr. Shearer was ever known to utter."

"What? Oh, tell us!" pressed the girls, but Jean was mute as a sphynx.

"I will tell you what grandma said, then," put in Ethel, finally, and in spite of laughing protests she went on. "She says she thinks Jean Hallock will find considerable treasure laid up for her when she comes to the kingdom."

The girls were quiet. "I wish I might," Jean said, simply and earnestly. "Do you think," she asked, "that it can be wrong to wish for that?"

"I do not see how it can be," Miss Van

Dorm answered, "when we are commanded, more than once, to lay up our treasure in heaven. It cannot be wrong to look forward to finding it there. And I remember something that Mrs. Smith once said. We had been reading of some gay and brilliant society affair, and she said, with a smile, 'My turn has not come just yet; but by and by I expect to share in much finer things than that.' She seemed so quietly waiting, as it were, for the right time, that it impressed me greatly."

"And it gives such a zest to work," added Lena, "to have such a hope in it. 'Our life is made broader by our hopes,' Dr. Eliot said, and I believe that."

"What a lovely Christian she is," mused Ethel aloud.

Again there was silence. Dolly broke it. "About the Smiths? Yes. It will do your hearts good to see them. The sale was completed; I now hold the deed of a piece of real estate and house in Winfield, eight miles from T——. There are five rooms; a good sized parlor and a bedroom below, and two chambers above; then a small kitchen and wood shed are built on at the back. Mrs. Smith and Jessie have each a single bed in the sleeping-room below, and Miss Smith has her room upstairs. She gets out there before

seven at night, and goes in at seven in the morning."

"Does it look pleasant?"

"Very cosey, now their furniture is settled. They have some good things left still, though they are old and not worth much. We had dinner on a small round table in one corner of the parlor, with a homemade screen to shut it off."

"And they are happy, I know."

"Yes, it would do you good to see Jessie. To live where she can walk right out of doors on to the ground makes her bliss complete. They have a small yard, and a porch with seats at the door. I found her waiting there when I got off the train. You can see the station from their door. And then the quiet nights. I really hope it may prove better health to all; I know the rest will to Miss Smith, tired as she is from standing most of the day.

"What does her physician say of Jessie?"

"That her gain is wonderful. He does not hold out entire cure to her, but he does think that the fresh air, and ability to move about in it, will prevent any further progress of the disease. And she can use her hands now, and Miss Smith procures the knitting of fancy things from the store, and the little money

thus earned is another source of thankfulness."

When the falling leaves of October had told them that the "summer home" must be broken up, and Jessie's eyes grew mournful with the thought of going back to their three upstairs rooms in the crowded city, Miss Van Dorm had said—"For my mother's sake you must all let me do something to brighten the lives of these 'widow and fatherless;'" and this had been the result. "It is not half as much as a few weeks in Newport would have been to us," she had said to Lena, "but I think the satisfaction will bear no comparison."

"Yes, Miss Van Dorm is a changed woman; she's converted through and through," Cousin Wealthy often said to herself.

They all left the room presently, drawing down the shades and closing the door softly behind them. They opened a door again, of Ma'am Bly's room.

"And the old lady really has gone home to a welcome, Maggie tells me," said Lena.

"Yes," responded Jean, "I think her daughter-in-law is glad to have her back. At all events, she has put her bed in the parlor and given her a room to herself. And there she sits, with mending basket piled high, and nods

to the passers-by, and smiles and sings—really sings,” with a smile.

For the Lord had not seen fit to bless the dear woman with any talent for “harmony.”

“And girls, what do you think! I had a present last night; Jaky brought it,” Jean said, as they passed downstairs to the pleasant parlor.

“What was it?” “Do tell!”

“Oh, a picture of Baby Max. Jaky said they had all wanted one so, and his father had a chance to work overtime one night and gave them the fifty cents he got for it, for that. So they had two tintypes, and really he looks very cunning, with Muff hugged tightly in his arms, and her eyes looking out as bright as his.”

“Muff, did you say?”

“Yes.”

“Really, then,” from the mischievous Ethel, “I think Lena should have had that; not you.”

They all tried not to smile. But it was a failure, and a ringing laugh relieved the tension, and woke the echoes of the old building.

For Muff’s hurt had been the beginning of such a pretty little romance right before their eyes. When the two girls drove away that day, leaving the embryo physician standing in the road, he had looked thoughtfully after

them. "Well, I have learned something from that kitty," was his comment. "A girl with a heart as interested as that in a little suffering animal, cannot be a mere puppet of fashion. Must be genuine somewhere."

When he found it necessary, frequently, after that, to counsel and advise in regard to the injured member, it was always with Lena Van Dorm. Until, not even a shadow of excuse being left, Muff having become one of the liveliest kittens in town, and, under the special privileges she enjoyed, fast verging toward one of the sleekest, he boldly dropped all pretences, but came all the same—to see the young lady.

She looked very pretty now as she stood by the window opening out on the drive, the color coming and going in her fair cheek. No one could wonder that Max Levison admired her.

"Has any one seen Agnes lately?" Ethel asked, presently.

"Yes, she called last night," from Jean.

"Busy in school, I suppose?"

"Yes, she entered last Monday. Maggie will begin work there to-morrow, and Agnes expects then to give nearly all her time to study."

"How does she stand?"

"She has not lost as much as she feared.

Helping her brother Don as she has, has been of great assistance to her now."

"Can she graduate in June?"

"Not as she ought, and I have prevailed upon her not to try. She will either take another year here, or go elsewhere for some seminary training."

"Was Mame with her?"

"No, she had stayed for extra work. She is in the grammar room, not in the highest class, either. But I saw her teacher the other day, Miss Vane, and told her what Mame wished to accomplish; a fair, common education, and then to enter upon hospital training. Agnes says she is very happy and contented."

The arrangement sounded simple now, but it had required many hours and persuasive arguments to effect.

"I always looked enviously at teachers," Jean had said to Agnes Storms, "and wished that duty seemed to call me to be one. It did not, but the next best thing is to fit some one else to be. You have the same longing; let me help you as I can, and when you are a successful professor in some college chair, why, pass it on to some one else, and I shall be fully repaid."

Now, Agnes had a bank book and an account to meet it, Maggie was hired to lift the

domestic burdens and give Mrs. Storms time to fully recover, and the daughter had gone back to the familiar halls, and in the evenings helped her brothers and the boarder with their studies.

The "boarder" was Mame Edson, through Lena Van Dorm's gift, on her way to her heart's desire of becoming a nurse to the sick, best of all, a Christian nurse.

"Somebody is driving up," Lena said, turning away from the open window, the flush on cheek deepening; Ethel sprang to her side.

"Oh! nobody but Max Levison," she said.

But the young man had seen the two faces at the window, and lifted his hat, with smile and bow.

"Are you not in need, young ladies, of a little fresher air than you can find in that ancient temple of learning?" he asked.

"I am," his Cousin Ethel responded, promptly, "but my friend here has a slight cold, or did have once upon a time."

"Nothing like an ozone tonic," the young man returned, gravely. "Let me advise both of you to get in here and away, as soon as possible."

The merry trio drove away, sending back parting words to the two now standing by the window, until their voices were lost in the distance.

"It is settled, Jean," the elder said then, turning to the other.

"Is it? Do you care?"

"No, I am glad. A year ago I could not have felt so. I should have been very indignant if any one had tried to win my sister away. But I do not feel so now."

"Max is a good fellow," said Jean, "I have known him always."

"Yes, I can trust him with the dearest thing I have in the world. And she will be happy; I am glad for her."

"But are your own plans for the present decided?" Jean asked, presently.

"Yes, I received a letter from New York yesterday, in answer to mine."

"You will go there to spend the winter?"

"Yes, but not at a five-dollar-a-day hotel this time." Jean looked her interest.

"When Lena was small," Miss Van Dorm went on, "she had for a year, a nursery governess, a bright active little lady, who married then a clerk in one of the large stores. They were ambitious to own a home of their own some time outside the city, and after their two boys came, they took a large house and the wife kept boarders, and supported the family in that way and so saved the husband's salary. But he died soon, and then the wife went on

in the old place ; has given her boys good educations, and does well, I think."

"Where is it?"

"Up town, in a quiet neighborhood, accessible by the Madison Avenue cars or the elevated. I stopped there once, when on a shopping trip and with no time for social calls."

"What will your fashionable friends say, Dolly?" Jean called her so sometimes when alone with her.

"What they please," and the lady drew herself up in something of the old haughty way. "It is not a shabby place," she added, "the parlors are large and pleasant, the service and table good, and she has a pleasant class of boarders, some of them have been there for years. As for my friends! Well, I hope there are some sensible people among them. And as for the others, I shall have no time for them."

"What are you going to do, Dolly?"

"I hardly know yet, Jean dear. There are two ladies boarding there, and have been for a long time, each of them principals in Industrial-Schools. I was interested in the little I heard them tell of the work, and I think they can open ways for my hands and service. If I was interested then, much more now since I have learned the pleasure of doing for others. If they tell me of a sick or suffering woman,

Jean dear, I shall try and find, and help her. That may not seem much, only one person, but it may open out the way to others. I shall try and stand ready, day by day, to do what I can find and make some one better and happier for my having lived. And in time, after I have learned the much I need to, I may be able to open some systematic service; I would like it to be in the way of helping girls, who have been denied in making what they wished of themselves, to become of use in the world. A denied life seems such a pathetic thing. It has ever since I heard the plaint of Agnes Storms that night. That was a revealing night to me, Jean dear. Only three months ago, and it seems as though I had lived years since. As for fashionable friends!" and the lady rose and seemed to shake them from her garments as she walked back and forth, "I have given them thirty years of my life, and that sufficeth. When one thinks, reasonably and calmly, of what this life means, and then, how we are willing to expend all our soul's energies upon things that do not satisfy for a day, is it not strange that we are so blind?"

"I understand that," Jean said, softly.

Miss Van Dorm went on, "My property is large, Jean, larger even than is usually sup-

posed. It has been well invested. But I cannot see why this relieves me of obligations to others, why, because I have more than others, I should be expected to do less; to take no interest in anything outside of myself and my own pleasures. Why, if I can give up care for bread, and work of my hands, I see now that my thoughts and educated mind should go with a consecrated soul into the study of the great questions of the day, how humanity can be lifted up, and helped, and saved for Christ. I have only lately learned this, Jean, but I purpose to make it my thought hereafter. I may not join a settlement, or a mission. Perhaps I have a work among those same fashionable friends. But, Jean dear, you have shown me that to use an opportunity, as it comes in one's way, may bring more blessings than one expected."

And she smiled brightly on her friend. These two understood one another.

A tap at the door and Maggie appeared, hat on, satchel in hand.

"It's going I am now, misses," she said. "I've done the last thing I can find. And it's thanking you I am for the pleasant summer I've had with yees, and for Tom too, and all."

"O Maggie, it's you that we thank," and Jean smiled brightly; "why, I don't see how

we could have gotten along without you. Do you, Miss Van Dorm?"

"Indeed I do not."

"You have been just as kind and good as you could be, Maggie, and I know the confusion and bother have been very trying a great many times," Jean went on; "I hope you will find your blessing for it."

"Sure, and I have that a'ready," the warm-hearted girl responded. "It's enough to see the face of yees smiling on me for a blissin'. And may it always be smiling and niver troubled."

"We must be going, too, I suppose," Jean said, when they had watched the retreating figure down the drive.

"Yes. We leave to-morrow, and I fear I shall have little assistance from Lena, in packing," with a smile.

"Why so soon, Dolly?"

"Our room is ready at any time, and we expect friends by the next Cunarder who were with us for some time on the 'other side.' Will you be in New York this winter, Jean?"

"I hope to, for some weeks. Like yourself, studying—society."

"We will be together, then, Jean. Shall you open this dear old academy another year?"

"Not next year, myself. A letter from a

charitable society asks for it for sick mothers with small children, or sick children with their mothers. I think I shall finish fitting it up and give them the use of it. Our little venture did nicely for once, with dear Mrs. Smith and Ma'am Bly to keep things moving smoothly. But after those two girls came later for the two weeks, with their city independence and gossiping tongues, I realized that a thing of this kind needed a head, as Cousin Wealthy had often said. There must be a matron, and constant overlooking. There is an idea floating in my brain, of some day seeing a Convalescents' Home here; those discharged from hospitals, half well, but with no place to fully recover. Mame Edson gave me that. But time will tell. I am glad I had this little opportunity, and did not let it pass by. I have a whole sheaf of pleasant memories left me."

"Now, just one, dear," and Jean turned her friend toward the open piano. Softly Dolly Van Dorm ran her fingers over the keys. Jean laid an open book on the rack. The beautiful voice, that had charmed so many, took up the words,—

"Gather them in! for yet there is room
At the feast that the King has spread;
Oh, gather them in!—let his house be filled,
And the hungry and poor be fed."

And Jean's smooth alto joined in the refrain; a charge to these two.

“Out in the highway, out in the byway,
Out in the dark paths of sin,
Go forth, go forth, with a loving heart,
And gather the wanderers in.”

Then with lingering glance they went out, turning the large key in the lock that gave back its old-time echo, and then to the other building to consign it to Tom.

The brilliant coloring that for weeks had made the mountains a marvel of beauty, had faded; patches of evergreen set off the bareness of tree and shrub; the withering leaves rustled under their footsteps as they went down to the street; but in their hearts remained a beauty greater than the summer time; a memory that would gild with glory any season; a hope that made bright all the days to come.

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